AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, AND ACADEMIC VARIABLES IN THEIR TRANSITION FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Dissertation

by

BETTYE LOIS GRIGSBY

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2005

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Patricia J. Larke
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ABSTRACT

African American Male Students' Perceptions of Social, Emotional, Physical, and Academic Variables in Their Transition From Elementary School to Middle School. (August 2005)

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The purpose of this study was to examine four variables that impact African American male students' perceptions of their transition from elementary school to middle school. This study determined what role social, emotional, physical, and academic variables have in the transition process from elementary school to middle school for African American males.

The two guiding questions for this mixed methods study were:

1. What are African American male students' perceptions of personal development variables on their transition from elementary school to middle school?
2. How do African American male students describe their transitional experience from elementary school to middle school?

Participants in this study were 149 African American male students from five middle schools in southeast Texas. Findings of the study were derived from the use of a

self-developed 52-item questionnaire (Student Transition Perception Survey) with one free-response question and interviews of ten students (two from each school).

The major findings in this study were:

1. Social variable – African American male students felt that schools did not provide a positive school climate, teachers did not treat them with respect, and their parents were supportive of their education.
2. Emotional variable – African American male students felt that schools did not make them feel successful, and they did not feel equal to their peers.
3. Physical variable – African American male students were equally divided in the acceptance of their physical appearance and when they compared themselves to others.
4. Academic variable – African American male students felt that teachers did not give them valuable attention in class.
5. When looking at the trend of student responses among the five schools, African American male students shared similar feelings about the social, emotional, physical, and academic variables.
6. African American male students expressed their feelings about being unsafe, experiencing differentiated teacher treatment, declining grades, and difficulty in their middle school transition.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, J. W. and Cloteal Albert, who instilled in me the values of hard work and perseverance. Without them, this study would have not have come to fruition. Cloteal Albert unselfishly kept and chauffeured my daughter frequently during this entire endeavor so that I might have the time needed to continue working and attending school. J. W. Albert offered support by reading, editing, and driving me to classes during the week. For their sacrifices, I am eternally grateful. This dissertation is further dedicated to my daughter, Sierrah Marie Grigsby. Thank you for always giving words of encouragement throughout this process. Another dedication is to my sister, DeEadra Albert-Green, who began this long journey with me and constantly was by my side to use as a sounding board. Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to all the African American male students, principals, and superintendents who let me enter into their world and share students' experiences.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The transition from elementary school to middle school often is a traumatic period for children and early adolescents especially the African American male (Anderman, Maehr, & Midgley, 1999). It is an experience for too many youngsters that may begin a negative cycle of relationships and self-efficacy from which recovery is difficult (Lipsitz, 1977; Smith, 1968). Research conducted by Simmons, Black, and Zhou (1991) indicates that the African American male's transition from elementary school to middle school is characterized by a dislike of school, a drop in grade point average (GPA), an increase in suspensions from school, and a decrease in perception of parents' approval of friends. African American males do not demonstrate greater increased independence at entry to adolescence. However, the African American male's aspect of his self-image remains positive and his aspirations remain higher than those of other adolescents (Rosenberg & Simmons, 1972).

Four areas of research concerned with characteristics of the emerging adolescent and their transition from elementary school to middle school are the social, emotional, physical, and academic variables (Wiles & Bondi, 1993). The middle school transitional period is a time in which a meaningful number of children are jarred from the mainstream of adaptive social and academic functioning. Academically, the structure of the student's learning environment becomes more complex than in elementary school, and expectations for academic achievement increase (Eccles et al., 1993). Socially,

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The style for this dissertation follows that of *The Journal of Educational Research.*

students must deal with a larger and more fluctuating peer network, at a time when, developmentally, relationships with peers intensify and take on greater significance in defining the self (Elias, Gara, & Ubriaco, 1985). Middle school teachers tend to have many students for short periods of time; hence, the student-teacher relationship changes from elementary school to middle school (Feldlaufer, Midgley, & Eccles, 1988). This change is associated with a change from small-group and individual instruction to whole-class instruction. Students also must deal with more negative student-teacher relationships that can be marked by greater distrust and an emphasis on teacher control and discipline – this at a time when adolescents seek greater autonomy and personal choice (Eccles et al., 1993). Emotionally, researchers have found declines in student self-perception and self-esteem associated with the transition from elementary school to middle school (Seidman, Allen, Aber, Mitchell, & Feinman, 1994). Physically, males tend to lag a year or two behind girls in physical growth and are self-conscious about their bodies (Wiles & Bondi, 1993).

Adolescence is defined as a period of transition. It is a time of self-discovery, expanding horizons, emerging independence, and physical and emotional growth (Gutman & Midgley, 2000). During the developmental period of early adolescence, there is a strong need for intimacy, autonomy, cognitive challenge, and feelings of competence. Coupled with the more obvious physiological and biological changes are changes in the cognitive, moral, psychological, and social realms (Kohlberg, 1976). More biological changes occur in the bodies of 10 or 14 year olds than any other age group, with the exception of children in their first three years of life. The middle school

has benefited from recent research relating to children going through the major transition from late childhood to adolescence (Wiles & Bondi, 1993). Three theories that will help guide this research study are the social bonding theory, the self-efficacy theory, and the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Hirschi's (1969) social bonding theory postulates that the more involved and committed a person is to conventional activities, the greater his attachment to others (such as family and friends) and the less likely that he will violate the norms and rules of society. Thus, adolescent misbehavior occurs when there is a loosening of ties to conventional institutions, including family, school, and peers. Unsatisfying social interactions in school are believed (a) to prevent some students from developing ties of attachment, (b) to prevent their involvement in school-related activities, and (c) to prevent their acceptance of rules as being fair and legitimate (Coker, 2001).

The self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1982) is concerned on one hand with the interaction between the appraisal of one's own capabilities; on the other hand, it is concerned with one's judgments of the odds for success in prospective situations. This theory is not concerned with the skills a person has but with the judgements of what a person can do with whatever skills he possesses (Bandura, 1986).

The terms of the debate on the self-esteem of African Americans probably have been posed by Clark and Clark's (1939) doll test that suggests that a persistent measure of self-hatred is evident among African American children because these children reportedly expressed preference for a White doll over an African American doll. Despite prior hypotheses, quantitative studies show that urban African American adolescents

have at least as high global self-esteem as their White peers (Rosenberg & Simmons, 1972; Tashakkori & Thompson, 1991). According to Baldwin (1984), the earlier conclusion that African Americans have low self-esteem was due to an erroneous utilization of a Eurocentric approach to conceptualize and explain the behavior of African Americans. However, attendance in a more integrated school may bring more low self-esteem for African American adolescents (Rosenberg & Simmons, 1972).

The self-fulfilling prophecy is at first a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior that makes the initial false conception become true for the individual (Merton, 1957). The self-fulfilling prophecy is formulated in five steps. First, the teacher forms expectations. Secondly, based on these expectations, the teacher acts in a differential manner. Thirdly, the teacher's treatment tells each student what behavior and what achievement the teacher expects. Fourthly, if this treatment is consistent, it will tend to shape the student's behavior and achievement. Lastly, the student's behavior and achievement with time will conform more and more closely to what is expected of him (Tauber, 1998).

The middle school model for intermediate education evolved from the earlier programs of the junior high school and represents a new and different way of working with emerging adolescents. The middle school was established as a school with its own special identity and organization (Wiles & Bondi, 1993). The transition to middle school is often characterized by a move to a larger, more complex environment, less emotional support from teachers, and decreased contact between students and their teachers and between students and their peers (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Simmons & Blyth, 1987).

This type of school structure is likely to threaten students' identification with their teachers and connection to their school environment. These types of changes, in particular, may challenge the academic success of students of color who are more likely to feel unconnected to an environment whose culture seems irreconcilable to their own (Ford, 1993; Steele, 1992). Boykin (1983) speaks about nine realms or dimensions that grew out of the belief system and orientation of traditional African society and manifested themselves in contemporary African American culture. Such dimensions have provided a framework to address issues in educating African American students.

Statement of the Problem

Educators are required to teach all students. President George W. Bush signed into legislation in January 2002 The No Child Left Behind Act. Within the spirit of the mandate, there are implications that middle school has the assurance that every child, regardless of any circumstance or condition of life, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, should receive a quality education in a safe, supportive, standards-based environment (George, 2002). However, current thinking is that schools are falling short of these goals, especially for African American males (Davis & Jordan, 1994). Out of the alarming discourse surrounding this issue has emerged an urgency to address the problems of African American males' schooling experiences (Davis & Jordan, 1994). The middle school years for the African American male adolescent are a critical period for life skills development (Okwumabua, 2000).

Looking through racial and gender lenses, educators should see that African American males are the most underserved segment of any school population (Murrell,

1994). They are one of the few groups who are most likely not able to read at grade level, to be absent from school due to in-school and out-of-school suspension, to be placed in special education, and to become a dropout (Larke, Webb-Johnson, & Carter, 1996; Smith, 2005). As such, these students are most likely not to experience the quality of life that benefits from a quality education for future life chances (Davis & Jordan, 1994). Research indicates that although African American students begin school with test scores that are similar to their White peers, by middle school, many African American students fall two grade levels behind (Steele, 1992). By the end of high school, in fact, African American students have skills in both reading and mathematics that are the same as those of White students in eighth grade (Haycock, 2001). Although the academic gap has decreased, there is still a substantial difference between White and African American students that has not changed over the decade at any grade (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2003). By middle school, many are working below grade level or barely passing; consequently, they see school as a place where they fail (Hrabowski, Maton, & Greif, 1998).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine four variables that impact the African American male students' perceptions of their transition from elementary school to middle school. This study determined what role social, emotional, physical, and academic variables have in the transition process from elementary school to middle school for African American males.

Research Questions

The guiding question in this research is: What are African American male students' perceptions of personal development variables on their transition from elementary school to middle school? More specifically, this research will respond to the following questions:

1. What are the African American male students' perceptions of social aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?
2. What are the African American male students' perceptions of emotional aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?
3. What are the African American male students' perceptions of physical aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?
4. What are the African American male students' perceptions of academic aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?
5. What is the difference in the social, emotional, physical, and academic aspects as they relate to each of the five middle schools?
6. How do African American male students describe their transitional experience from elementary school to middle school?

Significance of the Study

Middle school transition has a significant impact on the social, emotional, physical, and academic aspects of students. The transition contributes to the social and psychological development as well as the educational achievement and future educational attainment and lifestyle. For a large percentage of African American

children, early schooling experiences minimize the value of the children and lack a nurturing, supportive environment that takes them into consideration (Jackson, 2001). There is a void in the academic literature that targets exclusively the study of the African American male experiences in middle school and its relationship to achievement and social outcomes (Polite & Davis, 1999). While this is the case, academic literature is instead abundant with descriptions that produce negative connotations about elementary and high school African American males (Madhere, 1991). Little research of African American male transition to middle school has been conducted. A smooth transition is significant for any student to become high school graduates. A student's decision to drop out of high school is often the end result of a long series of negative school experiences – academic failure, grade retention, or frequent suspensions – that begin before the ninth grade (Wells, 1989). Since high school success is linked directly with the knowledge and skills students receive at the middle school level, it is imperative that educators gain some clear and concise understanding of the plight of African American males (Greene & Mickelson, 2001). The research in this study sought to broaden the knowledge base of understanding the transition variables that African American males encounter in middle school that could be used to provide effective strategies for educators.

Definition of Key Terms

Academic Variables: Encompasses teacher expectations and instructional strategies (Wiles & Bondi, 1993). These are sometimes referred to as academic aspects.

African American: The term used for people of African descent who are born in the United States and who have ancestral lineage in the United States system of

slavery. It also refers to people of African descent who live in the United States and it territories (Jackson, 2001).

African American Male Student: A masculine person of African ancestry between the ages of 11 to 14 who is enrolled or attends classes at school (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2000).

Early Adolescence: Stage of human development generally between ages 10 and 14 when individuals begin to reach puberty (Wiles & Bondi, 1993).

Emotional Variable: Encompasses feelings of superiority and inferiority and becoming a person in his own right (Wiles & Bondi, 1993). These are sometimes referred to as emotional aspects.

Middle School: A school in between elementary and high school, housed separately and, ideally, in a building designed for its purpose, and covering usually three of the middle school years: sixth, seventh, and eighth (Wiles & Bondi, 1993).

Perceptions: The basis of all learning. Perceptions result when a person gives meaning to external stimuli of sensations. Meanings that are derived from perceptions are influenced by an individual's experience and many other factors (*Dynamic Flight Glossary*, 2002).

Physical Variable: Encompasses a youngster's appraisal of his or her physical appearance (Piers & Herzberg, 2002). These are sometimes referred to as physical aspects.

School Climate: An intangible sense or feeling that people have about the atmosphere of a school (Jackson, 2001).

Self-Esteem: How much a person likes, accepts, and respects himself overall as a person. This also means to have a favorable opinion of oneself (Kunjufu, 1984).

Social Variable: Encompasses school climate, school culture, and interactions with peers, family, and staff (Anderman et al., 1999). This is sometimes referred to as social aspects.

Transition: A point at which students move from one segment of the education process to another. In this research study, from elementary school to middle school (Rice, 2001).

Assumptions

1. Students interviewed in this study were able to successfully articulate their experiences during their sixth grade year.
2. The students participating in this study followed the established guidelines during the completion of questions in the survey.
3. The interpretation of the data collected accurately reflected the perceptions of seventh grade African American males regarding their sixth grade year.

Limitations

1. The results could not be generalized for all middle school African American male students.
2. The sample in this study was limited to one region of Texas schools.
3. Only students who volunteered participated in this study.

Delimitations

1. Urban African American males participated in the study.
2. Only seventh grade African American males participated in the study during Spring 2004.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into six major chapters. Chapter I provides an introduction, a statement of the problem, a purpose for study, research questions, assumptions and limitations, a definition of terms, and a significance of the study. Chapter II consists of the review of related literature. Chapter III explains the methodology and procedures followed in the study. Chapter IV analyzes the quantitative data while Chapter V analyzes the qualitative data collected in the study. Chapter VI contains a summary, recommendations, and implications for future research and conclusion.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter focuses on African American males and the aspects that affect their transition from elementary school to middle school. In order to afford the reader a better understanding of this transition, five areas will be examined. The first area of research will describe the history of middle school education. The area will be divided into two parts: junior high and middle school. The second area will focus on the historical perspective of African American education from the 18th century through the 21st century. The third area will provide a distinct profile of African American males. This will include the culture, adolescent development, and their perception of the educational system. The fourth area will concentrate on the transition from elementary school to middle school as it relates to the social, emotional, physical, and academic aspects of young adolescence. The fifth area will include the theoretical framework used to form the study as it relates to the self-efficacy theory, the social bonding theory, and the self-fulfilling prophecy.

History of Middle School Education

The role of secondary education is important to the history of education. Secondary education has an extensive history. However, for purposes of this study, this section will begin with the junior high history, which is more closely related to the development of middle schools.

Part One: Junior High School Education

At the turn of the century, school reform focused on the functions and relationships of the elementary school and high school. The two curricula that dominated early junior high schools were enriched academic programs for college-bound students heading into the job market. The third objective in meeting the unique social, personal, and academic needs of young adolescents arose as the junior high school matured (Manning, 2000).

In 1899, the Committee on College Entrance Requirements reportedly favored a unified six-year secondary school beginning with the seventh grade. The following six ideas in part became the basis for the future development of the educational institution known as the junior high school (Bossing & Cramer, 1965).

1. Grades seven and eight needed to be added to the high school in a six-year sequence.
2. Grades seven and eight needed to be enriched by eliminating non-essentials and adding new subjects formerly taught in the high school, as had been recommended by the Committee of Ten and the Committee of Fifteen.
3. Recognition that the seventh grade, rather than the ninth grade, represents the natural turning point of psychological change in the life of the pupil.
4. Recognition that the age of adolescence requires a different educational approach from that found in the elementary school.

5. There is a need for a more gradual transition from the one teacher elementary school to the system of special teachers in a departmentalized high school. This will avoid the shock now commonly felt on entering high school.
6. There is a need to improve the retention power of schools by providing for enriched activities, guidance, and a program built around the needs of the group (Bossing & Cramer, 1965; Brough, 1995; Van Til, Vars, & Lounsbury, 1967).

High school dropout rates were blamed for the difficult transition from elementary school to high school. Therefore, appearing in the first decade of the 20th century, junior highs were hailed for their ability to prevent dropouts and to prepare students for the job market (Anfara, 2001). The junior high was an attempt to satisfy the call for a richer curriculum than the elementary school was able to offer and a more personal atmosphere that the high school was able to develop (George & Alexander, 1993). In 1919, the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools defined the junior high as one in which grades seven through nine were placed in a building of their own with a special teaching staff and administrators (Wiles & Bondi, 1993).

Five factors affected the reorganization of secondary education to incorporate junior high schools. The first factor was the rapid increase in high school enrollment, which resulted in administrative and building problems in the early 20th century. This was due to population growth, the substitution of machinery for child labor in industry, and extension of compulsory school attendance age laws in many states (Moss, 1922).

The second factor coincided with the developments in psychology. Adolescent psychology, in particular, emphasized that 12 was a more appropriate age than 14 for beginning secondary education. In the beginning of the 1900's, G. Stanley Hall, a psychologist, noted that schools needed to address the developmental needs of students (Anfara, 2001). Adolescents were physically and educationally out of place in elementary school; their individual differences, learning capacities, interests, and needs were not provided for satisfactorily (Moss, 1922).

A third factor was the study of pupil elimination or dropouts. Large numbers of dropouts occurred at the end of the eighth year of elementary school. Advocates suggested that a junior high school or six-year high school could postpone pupil elimination at least one more year (Moss, 1922). High dropout rate was blamed on the difficulty of transition from elementary to secondary school, the difficulty of students to adjust to the high school, an irrelevant and unrealistic curriculum, and retention in grade (Brough, 1995).

The fourth factor that affected the reorganization of secondary education was the teacher training procedures. Advocates of the junior high school pointed out that secondary teachers were trained more thoroughly in subject matter fields than elementary teachers. This would result in junior high teachers receiving the same training as high school teachers and instruction would improve. In practice, teachers from the traditional elementary school were recruited for seventh and eighth grades while teachers for ninth were recruited from traditional four-year high schools (Moss, 1922).

The fifth factor was the practicality of education. It would be more feasible to introduce vocational courses for seventh through ninth grade if classes were together in one building (Moss, 1922).

This junior high period is the recognition that schools were to understand and respond to the particular nature of the early adolescents while attempting to continue the influence of the home (Koos, 1927). However, in the 1950's, serious calls for reform of the junior high school could be heard. Questions arose as to whether the junior high school actually served the needs and interests of young adolescents (Manning, 2000).

Part Two: Emergence of Middle School Education

There were many concerns and criticisms about the present junior high structure, and it was evident that a change was necessary. Four concerns stand out in the literature. First, educators were apprehensive about how the junior high school imitated the senior high school in social activities such as dances and athletics. Secondly, college entrance requirements were questioned. Many colleges insisted on a four-year college preparatory program based on the 1909 Carnegie Units. Therefore, the ninth grade remained the first year of the college entrance program. This prevented the junior high from developing a unique three-year sequence. There needed to be continuity of education from entrance to exit (Alexander, Williams, Compton, Hines, & Prescott 1968). A third concern was that most states did not recognize junior high as a separate certification area. There was blanket certification for 7 through 12 or 9 through 12. This resulted in teachers taking positions in junior high schools while waiting for openings in the senior high school.

Finally, the name junior high school conveyed immaturity (Moss, 1922; Van Til et al., 1967).

Although the preceding concerns were valid and prevalent in the minds of many, the following four factors led to the emergence of the middle school. First, the successful launching of Sputnik in 1957 created an obsession for academic achievement especially in science, foreign languages, and mathematics (Brough, 1995). A second factor was the effort to eliminate racial segregation. Civil rights' protests of the 1950's and 1960's challenged tradition and schools to meet desegregation mandates (Brough, 1995). The third factor was the increased enrollment of school-aged children in the 1950's and 1960's. The shortage of buildings resulted in double, even triple, school sessions in the school districts (Alexander et al., 1968; Wiles & Bondi, 2001). The fourth factor that favored emergence of the middle school was the "band-wagon effect." This resulted when one middle school received favorable exposure in books and periodicals, then some administrators determined that the middle school was "the thing to do."

A special program designed for the 10 to 14 year old going through a unique transient period of growth and development was necessary to address the physical, social, emotional, and academic areas. This was lacking in most junior high schools. The middle school provided for individual differences, with the program tailored to fit each student and much needed innovations in curriculum and instruction (Alexander et al., 1968; Wiles & Bondi, 1993). William Alexander, known to many as the father of middle schools, initiated the change in the education of adolescents during his speech at Cornell

University. He envisioned a school designed specifically for the young adolescent which he called middle school (Krouscas, 2004).

During the 1960's and 1970's, educational associations added middle school components to try to fill the gap in professional development in middle level education (Brough, 1995). In 1973, the Midwest Middle School Association became the National Middle School Association (NMSA) (Anfara, 2001). A committee comprised of William Alexander, Alfred Arth, Charles Cherry, Donald Eichhorn, Conrad Toepfer, and Gordon Vars was appointed to develop a position paper for the association. The ten essential elements were developed in 1982 from the paper – *This We Believe* that ranged from educators knowledge about young adolescents to positive school climates (NMSA, 1995).

The 1970's and 1980's were a time for scholars to mold the development of middle level schools. However, middle schools still lacked their identity. Research showed that there was underrepresentation in state certification, college teacher education programs, and in professional recognition and leadership (Lounsbury & Johnston, 1988). Carnegie Corporation of New York established the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development in 1986 to place the compelling challenges of the adolescent years higher on the nation's agenda. The council established a Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents that commissioned research papers, interviewed experts in relevant fields, and met with teachers, principals, health professionals, and leaders of youth serving community organizations. The result was *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* published in 1989. The

recommendations specifically addressed the challenge in middle grade schools from size, curriculum, teachers/administrators, and parental involvement (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

The Carnegie Council offered grants to 27 states that submitted competitive plans for middle school improvements. This helped bridge the gap between theory and practice to increase achievement (Anfara, 2001). However, continuing into the 21st century, the academic gap between Whites and African Americans is still present. Over the years, many programs and state/federal guidelines have been enacted to ensure equity and equality for all students (Jackson, 2001). The latest is the No Child Let Behind Act that was enacted in January 2002 by President George W. Bush to advance the notion that all students can achieve and identifies effective strategies that are believed will result in the success of every student (George, 2002).

One such group of students affected by the programs and policies is the African American male. Within the history of middle school education, the literature did not address issues of diversity in African American education. In order to understand the African American male, it will be necessary to examine the unique, historical educational journey that has given rise to the present status.

History of African American Education

Part One: 18th and 19th Century

African Americans belong to the only immigrant group who has been legally denied access to education due to slavery. Their milestones in attempting to achieve educational equality, equity, and quality remain the benchmarks for determining the

progress being made in the education of people of color (Jackson, 2001). The literacy gap was the first achievement gap African Americans had to overcome. As early as 1800, a substantial amount of Whites in America were literate whereas 90% of the African Americans were highly illiterate (Anderson, 2004). The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel trained slaves in Christian principles and literacy in Virginia, Maryland, and South Carolina in the 1740's due to the belief that literacy was a prerequisite to baptism (Anderson, 2004). Seventy African American children were enrolled in the South Carolina school by 1755 (Anderson, 1995). In the mid to late 1700's, a law prohibiting any person from teaching or causing a slave to be taught to read or write was enacted in South Carolina and Georgia colonies (Anderson, 2004). These state laws grew out of fears and concerns that literacy was used as a means of freedom (Cornelius, 1991). Soon after, restrictions against African American literacy grew worse by local ordinances supplementing state laws (Bond, 1970).

Between 1800 and 1835, most of the southern states enacted legislation making it a crime to teach enslaved children to read or write (Anderson, 1988). Georgia provided fines, whippings, or imprisonment for anyone teaching slaves to read or write. In 1829, other southern states such as Louisiana, North Carolina, Virginia, Alabama, and Missouri followed suit (Cornelius, 1991). Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky refused to enact an anti-literacy law. However, the public opinion against African American literacy was so strong in Tennessee and Arkansas that opportunities for slaves and free African Americans to learn decreased at the same rate as the states that legally mandated literacy (Anderson, 2004). There was a significant decline in African American literacy

rates during 1830 to 1860. As a result, approximately 90% of the African Americans emerging from slavery were illiterate (Cornelius, 1991).

Despite the dangers and difficulties, 5% of the slaves had learned to read and write by 1860 (Anderson, 1988). Dangers such as the threat of beating, amputation, or death did not quell the slaves' desire for literacy. Literacy was freedom and an affirmation of personhood. Literacy affirmed not only their individual freedom but also the freedom of their people. Literacy was something to share with others and the community (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003).

Before President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands in 1865, slaves and free persons of color had already begun to make plans for the systematic instruction of their illiterates (Anderson, 1988), thus leading to the second great educational reform movement by African Americans in the South to establish state-supported public education as a right of citizenship (Anderson, 2004; Bond, 1970). The 1866 Civil Rights Act and the Fourteenth Amendment helped to make the education reform possible (Anderson, 2004).

Between 1860 and 1862, African Americans established private schools. In 1863, the Federal Commission of Enrollment governed African Americans' educational activities. By March 1864, a Board of Education was established to oversee the spread of African American schools in Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama. By September 1864, there were 60 schools with 8,000 scholars and more than 100 teachers. By December 1864, 95 schools with 9,571 children and 2,000 adults with 162 teachers were

being operated by the Board of Education (Anderson, 1988). In 1865, the school system was regulated and maintained by the Freedman's Bureau through federal contributions and the levying of property taxes (Sherer, 1997). By 1870, every southern state had a specific provision in its constitution to assure a public school system was financed by state funds (Anderson, 1995). However, in 1866, allegedly to reduce the financial costs to the bureau, its officials temporarily closed all African American schools under their authorization, and the general tax for freedman's education was suspended by military order (Morgan, 1995).

African American leaders petitioned Yankee military officers to levy an added tax upon the community to replenish the bureau's school fund. African American parents promised to pay extra money to help fund their chiId's education in spite of their financial burdens (White, 1955). Freedmen took control of the educational system and transformed federal schools into local free schools after the bureau withdrew its support (Anderson, 1988). In Georgia, African Americans opened 57 school buildings and financed 96 of the 123 day and evening schools (Jones, 1975). Ex-slaves were striving to restructure their lives by establishing freedom through the educational movement. Although Northern support was appreciated, African Americans resisted infringements that threatened to undermine their own initiative and self-reliance (Jones 1980).

Church-sponsored systems call Sabbath schools were established to provide basic literacy instruction in evenings and weekends (Anderson, 1988). Sabbath schools were largely owned and supported by local African American communities and taught by all African American staffs (Horst, 1977). In 1869, 1,512 Sabbath schools existed with

6,146 teachers and 107,109 pupils (Anderson, 1988). By 1885, the African American Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) had 200,000 children in Sunday school for intellectual and moral instruction. The spelling book was the primary book studied along with the Bible (Butchart, 1980). In 1896, a major blow was struck against the quest for social justice on the part of African Americans by a Supreme Court decision in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The court established its long-standing doctrine of separate but equal (Webster, 1974). By 1900, 64% of African American males aged 10-14 were literate while 71% African American females aged 10-14 were literate (Anderson, 2004). As students' attendance in schools rose, the illiteracy rate declined rapidly. In 1990, approximately 65% of African American children aged 10-14 attended school (Anderson, 1988).

Part Two: 20th Century and Beyond

The 1900's brought about significant changes in the education of African Americans. Booker T. Washington was an advocate for industrial education while W.E.B. DuBois fought for a higher academic standard for African Americans. South Carolina gave local school boards the power to discriminate the allocation of school funds between the races. Other states adopted similar practices (Anderson, 2004). In 1901, the disfranchising Constitution gave local school boards control of public education (Sherer, 1997).

By the late 19th century, Whites halted the spread of public school among African American children (Anderson, 2004). The White South used power to repress the development of African American public education (Harlan, 1958). Tennessee law

required that African American children attend separate schools (Hoffschwelle, 1998). The Southern Education Board revived the issue of improving African American education by couching their arguments in terms of developing a better skilled and contented African American labor force. In Middle Tennessee Lewis County, White frugality and outright discrimination worsened conditions in African American schools. The Lewis County school board annually replaced one to three White elementary school buildings while there was not an African American school building program (Hoffschwelle, 1998).

Between 1921 and 1924, there were three African American one-teacher schools that were worth $190 while the 34 White elementary schools averaged $773.35 in value (Wilkerson, 1970). Alabama's African American children who comprised 40% of the school age population received 11% of the school funds while Mississippi's African American's 6% population received 20% of the annual state funds (Anderson, 2004). The African American to White ratio of per pupil expenditures rapidly declined in the Southern states between 1890-1910. East Texas school buildings and equipment were extremely inadequate. In 1935-1936 many African American schools were housed in churches and lodge halls (Wilkerson, 1970).

In order to continue the progress in African American education, an alternative system of universal education was created. African American schools were largely dependent on private philanthropy and double taxation (Anderson, 1995). In 1914, $350,000 was transferred to the Slater Fund for the education of African Americans (Bond, 1970). In 1910, James Dillard became the general agent of the Slater Fund. Prior

to Dillard, elementary school graduation in southern schools was enough to qualify to teach in an African American school. Dillard was concerned there were not any middle grades to bridge the gap between elementary and secondary schools. Due to the opposition to creating high schools for African Americans, he used his funding pattern to extend the elementary grades (Morgan, 1995).

Significant changes occurred in Black education when African Americans joined forces with reformers to be directly involved in the school building process (Hoffschwelle, 1998). A crusade known as the Rosenwald Schools that was financed in part by the Julius Rosenwald Fund came to symbolize the push for African American common schools in the rural South during the first third of the 20th century (Caliver, 1936). African Americans despite their cash-poor living and working conditions raised over $4,725,000 to construct nearly 5,000 Rosenwald Schools that educated the elementary age African American children (Morgan, 1995).

Rosenwald schools were located in 95% of the South Carolina counties, 90% in Alabama, 86% in Louisiana, Maryland, and North Carolina, and 75% in Virginia (Anderson, 1988). Between 1913 and 1932, 5,357 African American buildings were located in 883 counties of 15 southern states were constructed (Wilkerson, 1970). By the end of the Rosenwald school campaign in the early 1930's, 90% of African Americans ages 5 to 14 were attending school compared to 91% of White children ages 5 to 14 (Anderson, 2004). The elementary school attendance increased from 36% to 90% in one generation (Anderson, 1988; Wilkerson, 1970).

The 1954 ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* helped to begin dismantling separate but equal schooling (Russo, Harris, & Sandidge, 1994). During the 1980's, educational reform departed further than ever from the civil rights concerns of equity ad equality (Weinberg, 1991). During 1930-1960 time period, due to segregation, inferior schooling conditions for minority students in Texas frequently led to poor academic performance, grades, and attainment (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). The Civil Rights movement in the 1960's resulted in African Americans marching to demand democratization of educational policymaking by city authorities and school boards and the eradication of institutional/personal racism from curriculum, instructional materials, student learning, employment and promotion practices, distribution of school funds, and other areas of schooling (Weinberg, 1991). In 1965-1979, many court cases were heard in the fight for desegregation (Russo et al., 1994). In the 1993-1994 school year, close to 49% of all African American students attended schools in which 70% or more of the students were racial/ethnic minorities (Valencia, 2000). As we move further into the 21st century, the African American male is still the least understood and studied of all sex-race groups in the United Sates (Blake & Darling, 1994). For purposes of this research, the next section will focus on the African American male.

African American Males

African American males are loved and loathed at school. They are heroes and standard bearers of hip-hop culture and athleticism in schools, while simultaneously experiencing disproportionate levels of punishment and academic marginality (Davis, 2001). A profile of the African American male student is helpful for educators upon

entering school. Information regarding family and community is essential to understanding the African American male. There are exceptions to any situation; however, research has observed some commonalties among the African American male's background (Addison & Westmoreland, 1999).

There are several identifying factors that can affect the development of young adolescent African American males. These factors include family structure, African American culture, racial identity, and their attitudes toward the educational system. Since educators should be aware of these factors in order to successfully educate African American males, these areas will be explored in this section.

Family Structure

Any discussion of African American life and culture is incomplete without consideration of the family (Hecht, Jackson, & Rideau, 2003). The African American family is the primary and most important tradition in the African American community (Franklin, 1988). The family is the institution that serves as the primary source of socialization for children and adolescents. African American adolescents receive support and nurturing within the family unit (Lee, 1996). During the family socialization process, values, morals, norms, strategies, and beliefs are taught to resist engaging in problem behaviors and that will facilitate their engagements in behaviors for academic, social, and life success (Tucker, 1995).

The African American family can be classified as heterogeneous. This means that the African American family is made up of single parent households, two-parent households, and extended families that cross all socioeconomic levels and geographical

regions in the United States (Hecht et al., 2003; McCollum, 1997). Data from the U.S. Bureau of Census (2002) indicate that 48% of African American children were living with a single mother. African American children living with a single father comprised 5% of the population. Therefore, a total of 53% of African American children were living with a single parent in 2002. Hill (2001) states that there is strength in the multinetwork family system of African Americans that adds a uniqueness to the family climate. For example, grandparents tend to assist sons and daughters with childrearing and child care, which provides long-lasting intergenerational ties (Boyd-Franklin, 1989).

The parenting style of the African American family is an important dimension that also affects the socialization process of the African American male (Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 2000; Wyatt, 2001). According to Wilson, Kohn, Curry-El, and Hinton (1995), African American families tend to utilize a democratic authoritative parenting style where family rules are circumstantially subject to provision. This suggests that African American parents are more concerned with children learning the concepts of having rules and adhering to family rules, than blindly following rules without thoroughly understanding them (Wyatt, 2001). African American parents are typically stricter than White parents (Taylor, Tucker, Chatters, & Jayakody, 1997). African American families also are likely to increase household duties or a harsher rotation of chores as strategies for instilling responsibility, discipline, as well as respect for parental authority (Kunjufu, 1984).

The family is one of the primary conduits of cultural identity codes (Hecht et al, 2003). The cultural, social, and personal experiences that African American males bring

with them to school must be valued and incorporated into the overall school learning experience (Witherspoon, 2002). Brookins (1996) defines the African American cultural system as being rooted in traditional African beliefs that center on communal values, spiritualism, practical experience, diverse cognition, and self-expression through harmonious interpersonal relationships. These beliefs can be found in Boykin's (1983) nine dimensions of African American culture as well. These dimensions are socialized tenets that find their roots in West African history. African American children are often socialized to learn in people-oriented contexts through oral language and kinship-centered interactions highlighted by communal, affective, lively, and global contexts (Boykin, 1983). Educators benefit from embracing cultural differences by acknowledging that most individuals are socialized in culturally encapsulating ways (Larke et al., 1996).

Adolescent Development – Racial Identity

All adolescents look at themselves in new ways, but not all adolescents think about themselves in racial terms (Tatum, 1999). Lee (1996) indicates that a strong racial identity will assist young African American males to cope during their young adolescent transitional period. A strong racial identity must be formed during the socialization process. Instilling racial pride in the rich heritage of African Americans fosters formation of a strong racial identity. In addition to dealing with the general developmental changes characteristic of the age group, African American young adolescents have to fashion for themselves a clarified ethnic identity (Gay, 1994). For many children, schools are also places where they learn about the meaning of race.

Although this may occur through lesson plans adopted by teachers, it is even more likely that children learn about race through the hidden or informal curriculum (Apple, 1982). As young people enter into adolescence, race becomes a more rigid identity construct as children learn the historical, ideological, and cultural dimensions associated with group membership (Cross, Parnham, & Helms, 1991).

Historically, African American males have suffered from the negative stereotypes of mainstream society (Coleman, Jussin, & Kelley, 1995). Some believe the stereotypes about the African American males that can cause feelings of fear about African American males. The search for a clarified identity is often accompanied by strong ethnocentric attitudes and behaviors, with corresponding intolerance and negativism toward ethnic others (Gay, 1994). Peer groups play a powerful role in shaping identity because the desire to be accepted by one's peers and fit in with one's peers often becomes a paramount concern for most adolescents (Noguera, 2003). However according to Majors and Gordon (1994), current research negates part of this belief.

Personal factors are formed from social, cultural, spiritual, and psychological experiences of African American males. According to Lee (1996), "achieving manhood has historically been a complex and challenging task for the African American male in America. African American manhood must be carefully fostered from an early age by major socializing agents and institutions" (pp. vii-viii). Reports by Burnette (1993) state that 90% of young African American males are positive young men who attend school and are active in their community. Barbarin (1993) indicates that the propensities to

distort the images of African American males individually and as a group make it difficult to imagine that an overwhelming majority of young African American males are successful in school, have strong emotional health, are socially competent, and are committed to their family and community.

Educational System

One institution that has a secondary effect on the socialization process of adolescent African American males is the public educational system. Willis (1990) indicates that in order for the African American male to succeed, acquiring an education is very important. Public school records indicate that a disproportionate amount of young African American males are placed in a special education curriculum or remedial courses (Davis, 2003; Joseph, 1996). African American males in 2000-2001 made up 8.6% of public schools. Of these, 20% were classified as mentally retarded, 21% were classified emotionally disturbed, 12% were classified as learning disabled, and 15% were classified as having other specific learning disabilities (Smith, 2005). African American males are much more likely to be suspended or expelled from school (Harry & Anderson, 1999; Thompson, 2003). In 2000-2001, 22% of the African American males were expelled and 23% were suspended (Smith, 2005). In the Langdon and Vespar (2000) study, African American students comprised 21% of the middle school student body. However, 36% of these middle school students were suspended during the 2000-2001 school year. Several authors agree that the abundance of African American males in special education, remedial academic tracts, and excessive disciplinary referrals is

attributed to the low academic expectations of teachers and administrators in public schools (Wyatt, 2001).

On the other hand, African American students are continually underrepresented in gifted and talented education classes and the more challenging academic programs (Ford, 2002). The disparities in educational achievement of African American males used to be cited as it was not popular to be smart (Kunjufu, 1989). However, Cook and Ludwig's (1997) study of 25,000 public and private school children provided no evidence to support that peer pressure concerning acting White inhibited learning or achievement.

Based on evidence that African American males begin to slide academically sometimes before the third or fourth grade (Kunjufu, 1984; Lloyd, 1978), many educators are focusing on boys in the early elementary years. However, when in the classroom, educators must adapt their teaching to fit the learning styles of the students in the classrooms.

Classroom Instruction

Teachers who consider learning styles for designing lessons should be able to successfully motivate the African American male learner (Ford & Harris, 1994). Many African American male students rely upon visual stimuli much more than auditory. The lecture method of teaching will not motivate these male students because they must have a lot of visual stimuli. Similarly, they are more tactile and kinesthetic. Allow these students to work with their hands on projects and move about the room when learning (Addison & Westmoreland, 1999). For optimum learning, the African American male

student requires a classroom devoid of noise; therefore, the teacher should maintain strict discipline in order to foster a quiet atmosphere. African American students function best when allowed to have an informal seating arrangement in a brightly lighted room (Kuykendall, 1992).

Johnson, Johnson, Tiffany, and Zaidman (1983) conducted a study with 18 fourth grade African American students to determine individual and cooperative learning. They found that cooperative learning compared to individual learning promoted higher academic achievement. Some of the learning preferences Hilliard (1989) found to be characteristic of African American learners are (a) emphasis on group cooperation; (b) tendency to be holistic thinkers; (c) use of strong, colorful expressions; (d) preference of learning material that has a human social content and is characterized by fantasy and humor; and (e) the requirement that relevant concepts have special of personal relevance.

Traditionally, the American classroom primarily consists of linear communication from teacher to student. Teachers should move to a more circular model where students and teachers are learning from each other (Kunjufu, 1984). As a result, teaching styles such a cooperative learning, whole-group mastery learning, and school specific interventions that capitalize on cultural strengths should be initiated in schools with African American populations (Tatum, 1999). Hilliard (1976) states that African American children tend to use learning styles that are inconsistent with those of the majority culture. These students are more relational than analytical. Thus, they tend to be more global in their focus, find more meaning in text, have shorter attention spans, may tend to devalue linear relationships, and try to find personal relevance in the content.

There are differences in learning styles within the African American group of students. Some African American students have analytical learning styles that suggest that African American students are very capable of both analytical and relational learning styles (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1992).

African American males thrive best in a cooperative atmosphere rather than a competitive one where they might be shown to be less intelligent. Using varied teaching methodology is more beneficial than the traditional, repetitive methodology on these young men (Kuykendall, 1992).

The rapport between the teacher and the African American male student must be established for learning to be accomplished. If the student believes that the teacher is disinterested in him, he will react by being distractive and refusing to cooperate. Nonverbal communication is very important to African American male students. Teachers whose mannerisms and tone of voice do not express acceptance will usually be given reactive, defensive, hostile responses by the student (Addison & Westmoreland, 1999). The African American male student who has been unsuccessful in the classroom has a tendency to concentrate on his past failures when attempting an assignment. Failure is a threat to him personally and is not comprehended as a learning experience (Addison & Westmoreland, 1999).

The African American male is an enigma to some educators. Within the classroom in sight of his peers, he is non-compliant and presents the appearance of laziness. However, when one-on-one with the teacher, he can be a very caring and sensitive person. This behavior is a challenge to many educators. African American

males enter the beginning of their educational experience with much excitement. By the time they have reached high school, the joy for learning has disappeared (Kunjufu, 1984). Schools must be cognizant of this behavior and find ways to eradicate this phenomenon. It would behoove the school systems to engage in multicultural education and programs that emphasize the appreciation of diversity directed especially towards African American males. When these programs are in practice, educators can expect greater participation, academic achievement, improved self-esteem, and more positive behavior from the students (Herbert, 1998).

Transition From Elementary School to Middle School

As students progress through the American educational system, they make frequent transitions for which students must adapt. As students progress from one level of education to the next, they can experience major changes in school climate, educational practices, and social structures (Rice, 2001). Early adolescence is a time in which change occurs within almost every domain of experiences – physical, social, emotional, and academic. Most adolescents handle these changes without developing problems. However, for some adolescents, this period can be a time of increased stress that can significantly affect adjustment. One area of potential stress is the transition to middle school (Eccles et al., 1993).

Transition to middle level schools is a time of declining motivation for many young adolescents. Research suggests that the early adolescent years mark the beginning of a downward spiral for some individuals, a spiral that leads some adolescents to academic failure and school dropout (Eccles et al., 1993). This period is pivotal for a

number of reasons, including the fact that academic decisions are made that may have enduring consequences. Turning away from or being "turned off" by academic endeavors in the sixth or seventh grades can influence course and career choices and, ultimately, may lead to undesirable alternative endeavors (Anderman et al., 1999). The many changes experienced in secondary school have been found to exert an adverse influence on adolescent functioning that includes declines in academic motivation, perceived competence, intrinsic interest in school, lower levels of achievement, negative attitudes toward learning, and decreased classroom engagement (Blyth, Simmons, & Carlton-Ford, 1983; Harter, 1981).

During the early adolescent years, youth seek to be independent and autonomous. However, the typical middle school is characterized by rules, control, and an emphasis on "discipline" with relatively few opportunities for students to make important, autonomous decisions (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). The child of this age is struggling with questions of sense of self, competence, and identity; yet, the system places the child in contexts where sense of competence may be undermined and identity may be threatened (Anderman et al., 1999). Moreover, instead of warm, supportive relationships with adults in school, middle school teachers are seen as more remote and impersonal than are elementary teachers – seeming to know but a few students well. In short, the environment of many schools attended by early adolescents is at distinct variance from what would be optimal for this stage of development (Anderman et al., 1999).

Physical Aspect

Young adolescence is a restless age for students. The onset of puberty brings an abrupt end to the stability of childhood (Eichhorn, 1966). For males between the ages of 9 years to 13 years, accelerated physical development is marked by increase in weight, height, heart size, lung capacity, and muscular growth (Alexander & George, 1981; Eichhorn, 1966; Wiles & Bondi, 2001). In sixth grade, many girls are several inches taller than the males (Lounsbury & Johnston, 1988). A wide range of individual differences among students begins to appear. Glandular imbalances occur, resulting in acne, allergies, dental and eye defects. Some health problems are real and some are imaginary. Body contours change, such as large noses, protruding ears, and long arms leading to posture problems and self-consciousness about their bodies (Wiles & Bondi, 1993). A girdle of fat often appears around the hips and thighs of boys in early puberty. Slight development of tissue under the skin around the nipples occurs briefly, causing anxiety in boys who fear they are developing "the wrong way." Receding chins, cowlicks, dimples, and changes in voice result in possible embarrassment to boys. Boys tire easily and eat large amounts of improper foods. Fluctuations in basal metabolism may cause students to be extremely restless at times and listless at other (Wiles & Bondi, 2001). Middle school students need frequent opportunities for physical movement as well as help in diet, nutrition, personal hygiene, and coping with the physical problems that occur during puberty (Alexander et al., 1968).

Looking at physical characteristics from the perspective of African American males in relation to their teachers adds another dimension to the physical aspect.

According to Kunjufu (1984), many teachers use size to discipline African American males between infancy and nine years of age. However, from fourth grade on, boys become taller than the teachers and can look them directly in the eye or down at them. This becomes a serious dilemma for many teachers.

Social Aspect

Early adolescence does not only involve physical changes associated with puberty, but includes the social environmental changes that characterize the transition from elementary school to middle school (Gutman & Midgley, 2000). The social environment at school is the school's climate. Middle schools are larger, more complex, offer less emotional support from teachers, and decreased contact between students and teachers, as well as between students and peers (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). School climate can be a positive influence on the health of the learning environment or a significant barrier to learning (Freiberg, 1998). Elements that make up school climate range from the quality of interactions in the teacher's lounge to the noise levels in hallways and cafeterias, from the physical structure of the building to the physical comfort levels of the individuals and how safe they feel. The size of the school and opportunities for students and teachers to interact in small groups can add to or detract from the health of the learning environment (Freiberg, 1998). Although the school climate is so complex and is often considered a stressor for incoming sixth graders, Cotterell (1982) found that usually after the first three weeks, students' initial concerns with the physical layout and academic routines begin to diminish. However, many students continued to report a continued sense of loneliness and alienation as well as a

feeling of potential threat from teachers and older students. One source of untapped social support is African American involvement.

Research from Comer and Pouissaint (1992) and Duncan, Yeung, Brooks-Gunn and Smith (1998) links parent-school involvement to a child's positive academic performance. Cook and Ludwig (1997) found that African American parents were as involved in their children's education as White parents from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. Sixty-two percent of students in Thompson's (2003) study rated their parents'/guardians' involvement in their middle school education as excellent or good.

Another study by Chavkin and Williams (1993) determined that 61% of the sixth and eighth grade African American parents did not attend events. However, 86% of these students reported that their parents helped them with homework. Further involvement included purchasing books and materials, contacting teachers on a regular basis, helping students study for tests, limiting television viewing time, talking about college, and supporting students in arriving at school on time (Chavkin, 1993; Thompson, 2003).

Emotional Aspect

Along with the physical and social development of the young adolescent, the increased variability of the sixth graders' emotional status becomes evident (Lounsbury & Johnston, 1988). Who am I? How do I feel about myself? What do others think of me? Where do I fit? These are all important issues for the early adolescent because the transitional time between childhood and adolescence is a time of finding oneself in relation to the rest of the world (Alexander et al., 1968; Walker & Lirgg, 1995). The

early adolescent feels less secure in many areas than his younger counterpart and is certainly more confused about the many changes that are taking place within. It is a time when comparison and understanding are absolutely necessary for healthy emotional development (Lounsbury & Johnston, 1988).

Environmental changes that occur during transition from elementary school to middle school can have a significant impact on the student's self-beliefs (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Once the transition has taken place, young adolescents' general self-esteem is lower and less stable and their self-consciousness is higher (Simmons, Rosenberg, & Rosenberg, 1973). However, after students adjust to the school change and develop new social networks and roles, self-esteem rebounds by the spring of seventh grade (Wigfield & Eccles, 1994). In African American children, global self-image has been shown as an area of strength (Rosenberg & Simmons, 1972). High self-esteem has been attributed to positive family love and relationship as well as peer comparisons.

Academic Aspect

Although the social and emotional aspects are important, the area of academic achievement is a critical piece to the transition from elementary school to middle school for the early adolescent. Students display a wide range of skills and abilities unique to their developmental patterns that may range from the concrete-manipulatory stage to the ability to deal with abstract concepts (Wiles & Bondi, 2001). Therefore, as early adolescents mature, they shift from primarily deductive to more inductive thinking and from concrete to abstract thinking. Their thinking also becomes more hypothetical,

abstract, critical, reflective, and metacognitive than ever before (Manning, 1993). Instructional strategies that capitalize on the unique developmental characteristics of early adolescents must include opportunities for positive interaction with peers and teachers, participation in active hands-on tasks, and refined hypothetical and abstract thinking (Swafford & Bryan, 2000).

Alspaugh (1998) determined that there was a consistent student achievement loss associated with the transition of students from multiple elementary schools to a single middle school. However, students who transitioned from a single elementary school to a middle school experienced less of an achievement loss. Overall, student achievement scores tended to recover to their pretransitional levels in the year following the transition (Alspaugh & Harting, 1995).

With regards to African American male achievement, there are substantial disparities in African American achievement compared to their peers as measured by standardized test scores, grade point averages, college entrance, and completion (Irvine, 1990). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2003), the performance gap in reading between Whites and African American students remains wide. It has not changed significantly from 1992 to 2003 at any grade. Math scores show some improvement at each grade level, but the gap continues to exist.

Teachers have a pivotal role to play in reversing the negative academic behaviors of African American males. As students move into the upper grades, less concern is allocated to the student, and more attention is given to the subject matter. Teacher expectations are the major factor in student achievement (Kunjufu, 1984). Teachers must

show African American male students the relevance and applicability of coursework to one's adult years by incorporating family living skills into social studies, introducing family budgeting concepts into mathematics lessons, and emphasizing business and job-related communication and writing skills instruction into language arts and English classes. Also, teachers should strongly encourage African American male students to pursue college or postsecondary training (Garibaldi, 1992).

Young adolescents are in the throes of dramatic physical, social, emotional, and academic changes. They need in their schools adults who understand thoroughly the changes that are affecting them, as well as adults who are capable of designing and delivering educational experiences respecting these changes and not ignoring them as something that will pass with time (Wavering, 1995).

Theoretical Framework

The transition to middle school involves major environmental changes. Adolescents move from a personalized school environment of familiar peers to an impersonal, departmentalized one with curricular tracking into college preparatory, general, or vocational paths. Under these new social structural arrangements, students must reestablish their social connectedness and status within an enlarged heterogeneous network of new peers and multiple teachers in rotating class sessions (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). The social bonding theory encompasses the following elements that refer to the connectedness students may have with school.

1. *Attachment* refers to the sensitivity to and interest in others, to how strongly we are tied to them. This requires sensitivity to the needs of others and an

interest in their welfare. There are three prime locations for attachment: parents, school, and peers (Hirschi, 1969). Individuals with strong and stable attachments to others within an environment are more likely to abide by rules (Alston, Harley, & Lenhoff, 1995).

2. *Commitment* refers to the investment an individual has in social activities and institutions (Hirschi, 1969). Commitment requires time, energy, and effort. Individuals who have invested time, energy, and resources into conforming to social norms and expectations are less likely to deviate (Alston et al., 1995).
3. *Involvement* refers to the amount of time we are involved in conventional activities, primarily through school, recreation, and family (Hirschi, 1969). An individual who is actively engaged in conventional endeavors simply has less time and opportunity to engage in deviant activities (Alston et al., 1995).
4. *Beliefs* refer to the acceptance of conventional morality and a respect for authority. Belief refers to adhering to such values as sharing, sensitivity to the rights of others, and respect for the legal code of the society (Hirschi, 1969).

The self-efficacy theory refers to a person's belief about his ability to perform a specific behavior (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy theory encompasses two components: efficacy expectations and outcome expectations. Efficacy expectations refer to a person's conviction that he can successfully produce the behaviors that will lead to a desired outcome (Bandura, 1998). Self-efficacy mediates learning through encouraging perseverance and providing the confidence needed to try different strategies (Schunk, 1984). Outcome expectations refer to the person's belief that a particular course of

action will produce a certain outcome (Bandura, 1977). Fraser and Fisher (1994) claim that student perceptions account for appreciable amounts of variance in learning outcomes.

Madhere (1991) conducted a study with 320 African American students grades 5 to 8 to determine the effect self-esteem had on different components of an adolescent's life. Madhere (1991) found that academic self-esteem peeked significantly at sixth grade and African American males exhibited a high level of intrapersonal self-esteem.

The self-fulfilling prophecy describes situations in which teacher expectations influence student behavior. Teacher expectations can become a self-fulfilling prophecy in determining the success and/or failure of students (Chunn, 1993). When a teacher forms an expectation, no matter how fleeting, the self-fulfilling prophecy is set in motion (Tauber, 1998). Research establishes that teacher expectations play a significant role in determining how well and how much students learn (Bamburg, 1994). Students tend to internalize the beliefs teachers have about their ability. Students generally rise or fall to the level of expectation of their teachers (Raffini, 1993). According to Chunn (1993), teachers communicate their expectations in the following ways:

1. Give low expectation students the answer or call someone else rather than trying to improve their response through repeating the question, providing cues, or asking a new question.
2. Interact with low expectation students more privately than publicly.
3. Exhibit less friendly interactions such as less smiling, nonverbal warmth, less eye contact, nonverbal communication of attention and responsiveness.

4. Criticizing low expectation students more frequently for incorrect responses.

Nine Dimensions of African American Culture

Since children do not leave their culture at the school's door, it is important to discuss the nine dimensions of African American culture. Table 2.1 displays the nine dimensions of Africa America culture. Although there are nine dimensions, the framework in three were more applicable for this study. For purposes of this research the following three will be highlighted: verve, communialism, and orality. These three dimensions are closely related to the social and academic aspects discussed in the research. The aspects of the African American cultural experience are often at odds with larger mainstream ideals (Boykin, 1983). Cultural experiences lead to a patterning of life where more hierarchical attention is given to some ideals over others (Boykin, 1986).

Verve is a propensity for the energetic, the intense, the stimulating, and the lively. It connotes a disdain for the dull and the bland, regardless of what ends are served (Boykin, 1983). It implies a propensity for the energetic, the intense, the stimulating, and the lively. It connotes a tendency to attend to several concerns at once and to shift focus among them rather than to focus on a single concern or a series of concerns in a rigidly sequential fashion (Gay & Abrahams, 1973). A study by Boykin and Bailey (2000) determined that 70% of the African American children preferred school contexts that employ a variety of vervistic, high-energy pedagogical, and learning strategies. Teachers should give African America students frequent opportunities to move around (Hale-Benson, 1986).

Table 2.1 Nine Dimensions of African American Culture

Name of Dimension	Definition
Spirituality	Approaching life as though its primary essence were vitalistic rather than mechanistic.
Harmony	A belief that humans and nature are harmoniously conjoined.
Movement	The interwoven mosaic of movement, music, dance, percussiveness, and rhythm, personified by the musical beat.
Verve	A propensity for the energetic, the intense, the stimulating, and the lively.
Affect	The integration of feelings with thoughts and actions, such that it would be difficult to engage in an activity if one's feelings toward the activity ran counter to such engagement.
Communalism	Denotes the importance of or priority placed on social bonds and interconnectedness with others.
Expressive Individualism	An emphasis on spontaneity rather than on systematic planning. Students display a distinct personality.
Orality	The preference for oral/aural modes of speaking and communication.
Social Time Perspective	Behaviors are bound to social traditions and customs of the past that serve as guideposts and beacons for future endeavors.

Communalism is commitment to social connectedness where social bonds and responsibility transcend individual privileges. There is an awareness of the interdependence of people (Boykin, 1983). One acts in accordance with the notion that

duty to one's social group is more important than individual privileges and rights. Sharing is promoted because it signifies the affirmation of social interconnectedness; self-centeredness and individual greed are disdained (Hale, 1980). A study by Boykin and Bailey (2000) determined that 70% of the African American preferred activities such as sharing of knowledge and materials, as well as working together in groups so that all members can achieve.

Orality is the preference for oral/aural modes of speaking and communication. Speaking is construed as a performance and not merely as a vehicle for interacting or communicating information (Boykin, 1983). Cultural groups define themselves in part through language use (Hecht et al., 2003). African American male students value aural modes of communication and oral expression to carry meanings and feelings (Hale-Benson, 1986; Watkins, Lewis and Chou, 2001). There is a reliance on the call-and-response mode of communication. Being quiet and waiting one's turn to speak often implies a lack of interest in what the other is saying (Jones, 1980). African American students' relational style favors the arts. As a result, they benefit from creative and active environments that promote higher-order thinking skills and foster open-ended divergent thinking (Kirkland & Federlein, 1990).

Summary

Middle schools have a relatively recent history. They are established as a result of dissatisfaction with the degree to which high schools and later junior high schools were unsuccessful in meeting the developmental needs of young adolescents and helping them transition from elementary school to middle school (Pollard & Ajirotutu, 2001).

African Americans pursued learning because this was how you asserted yourself as a free person, how you claimed your humanity. Learning was pursued so you could work for the racial uplift and liberation of your people. Education was pursued so you could prepare yourself to lead your people (Perry et al., 2003). The African American's philosophy of education equated their social identity as a free people with the pursuit of literacy and learning.

Today, the exclusive African American males' experiences in school, related achievements, and social outcomes have a very limited place in the academic literature (Polite & Davis, 1999). Although many African American males are achieving at commendable levels and are navigating the academic and social currents of their lives, their experiences have often gone unnoticed. As a group, African American males may be at risk; however, many have survived and progressed successfully (Polite & Davis, 1999).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine African American male students' perception of social, emotional, physical, and academic variables in their transition from elementary school to middle school. This research was a mixed methods study that included the quantitative and qualitative processes for gathering data to answer the six research questions.

Qualitative and quantitative are not fundamentally opposed and even complimentary, as the former is in need of verification by the latter (Sciarra, 1999). For this reason, I have chosen both paradigms to provide a more complete picture of African American males' perception of their transition from elementary school to middle school.

Quantitative methods focus on the strict quantification of observations (data) and on the empirical control of variables. This form of research most often incorporates large-scale sampling procedures and the use of statistical tests to study group averages and variances (Ponterotto & Grieger, 1999).

Qualitative research is research that involves analyzing and interpreting texts and interviews in order to discover meaningful patterns descriptive of a particular phenomenon. This paradigm focuses on the voices of the participants (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

The following research questions were responded to while completing the study:

1. What are the African American male students' perceptions of social aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?

2. What are the African American male students' perceptions of emotional aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?
3. What are the African American male students' perceptions of physical aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?
4. What are the African American male students' perceptions of academic aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?
5. What is the difference in the social, emotional, physical, and academic aspects as they relate to each of the five middle schools?
6. How do African American male students describe their transitional experience from elementary school to middle school?

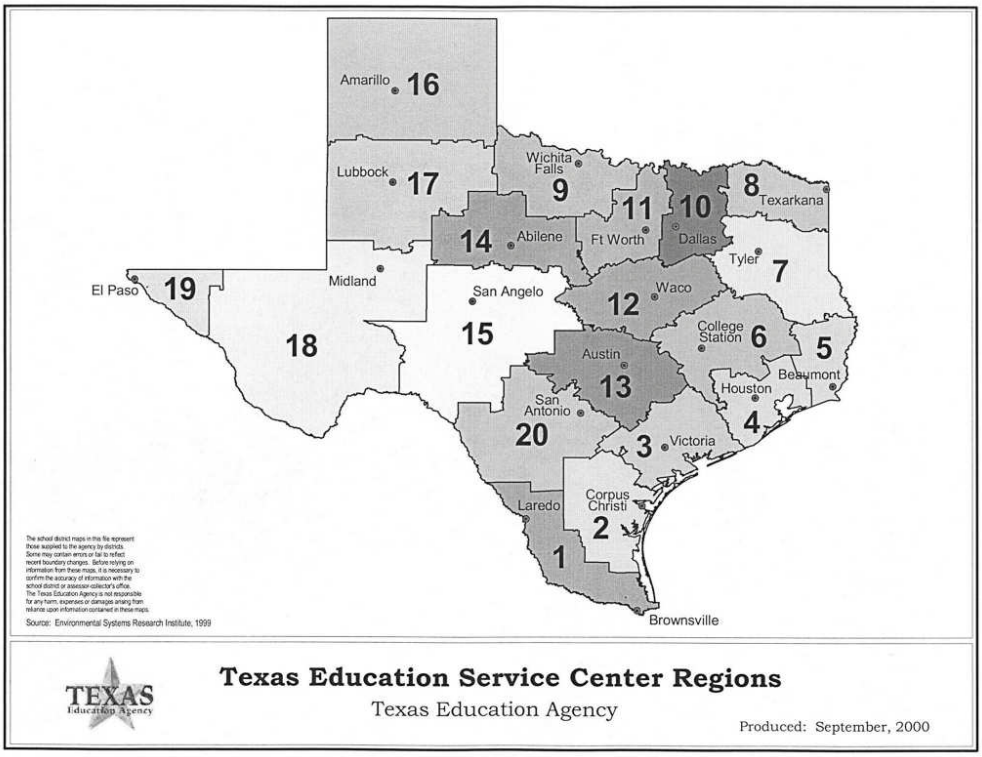
This chapter includes a description of the population of interest, instrumentation, an elaboration of the procedures used in sampling and data collection, and data analysis. Accordingly, the chapter is divided into four parts with each part addressing one of these methodological concerns.

Population

Initially, the target population in this study was 356 seventh-grade African American males from six public middle schools in Region 5 in the southeastern part of Texas. This information was based on data received from the administration building in Spring 2004 from the districts in Region 5. While six schools exemplified the characteristics for the study, only five participated.

The State of Texas is divided into 20 education regions (Figure 3.1). Region 5 consists of the following counties: Tyler, Jasper, Newton, Hardin, Orange, and Jefferson (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.1. Education Service Center Regions for the State of Texas.



The school districts selected for this study were located in the Gulf Coast region in Jefferson County. These schools were identified because each location maintained an enrollment of 50% or more African American students for the school years 2001, 2002, and 2003 (TEA, 2003) as noted in Table 3.1

Figure 3.2. Education Service Center Region 5.

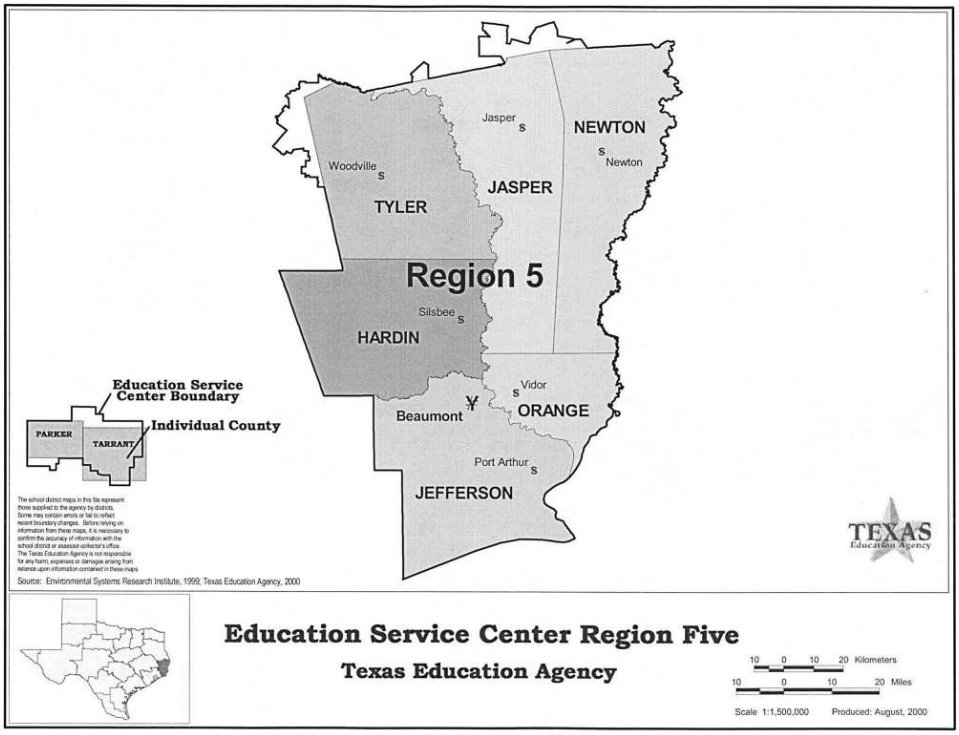


Table 3.1 shows the information gathered from the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) located on the Texas Education Agency website. The percentages of African American students enrolled in the five schools participating in the study ranged from 81.5% to 97.2% in the 2000-2001 school year. The 2001-2002 school enrollment percentages ranged from 76.7% to 96.4%. The 2002-2003 enrollment ranged from 72.2% to 95.8%.

Table 3.1. Percentages of African American Enrollment for Three Years of Schools Participating in the Study

School Year	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
School A	81.5	85.2	86.2
School B	84.0	87.2	82.1
School C	75.3	76.7	72.2
School D	97.2	96.4	95.8
School E	83.9	83.4	86.8

Since its inception in 1983, this southeastern Texas school district participating in this study has gone through several mergers. The district was established in 1983 through the merger of two districts. As of today, this school district encompasses 153.34 square miles. Throughout these mergers, there have been some significance changes in building facilities, yet only a few new structures have been erected.

School A was dedicated in 1958 as part of the original district. In the late 1990's, a new wing was added. The school was located in the northwest side of the city with mid to upper socio-economic range. School A had a population of over 600 students: 8% White, 85% African American, and 7% Hispanic. There were 38 African American seventh grade male students involved in this study.

School B was built in the late 1890's and was used until 1997. In 1998, a name changed and a new building was erected to meet the 21st century. School B was situated

in a low to mid socio-economic area centrally located in the city. School B had a total population of almost 500 students: 4% White, 82% African American, 3% Asian, and 12% Hispanic. There were 28 African American seventh grade male students involved in this study.

School C was built in 1968 as a new building and as of today, still exists as a middle school. This school was located in the south end of the city. School C had a total population of 800 students and was located in the mid to upper mid socioeconomic range. This school had a White population of 16%, 69% African American, 5% Asian, and 12% Hispanic. There were 18 African American seventh grade male students involved in this study.

School D was erected in 1913 as a one-grade high school campus in the north end of the city. In 1927, it affiliated itself with standards equal to other eleventh and twelfth grade schools in the U.S. The early settlers to the area donated the land for the school, and so it was named in their honor. In 1948, School D consolidated with another school district. In later years, two high schools were converted into one gigantic high school. In the 1980's, this campus became a single high school grade level campus. Currently, School D is situated in the upper north part of the school district and was converted into a middle school in the mid 1900's with a population of 300 students. Of this population, there were 2% White, 95% African American, and 5% Hispanic. There were 26 African American seventh grade male students involved in this study.

School E was erected in 1922 and was used on a higher level of education. In 1942, it was changed to a public school for secondary level education. School E is

located in the south central part of the district in the lower to mid socioeconomic range. School E had a population of 500 students. Of this population, 85% consisted of African American, 8% Hispanic, and 1% Asian. There were 39 African American seventh grade male students involved in this study.

Table 3.2 discusses target and sample populations as well as percentages of participation of each school in the study. Overall, 297 students were the target population. Actual sample size was 149 students from all five schools, which was 50.2% overall participation.

Table 3.2. Total Participants in Survey

School	Target Population	Sample Population	Percentage of Participation
School A	77	38	49.3
School B	48	28	58.3
School C	46	18	39.1
School D	49	26	53.1
School E	77	39	50.6
Total	297	149	50.2

Instrumentation

Student Perception Transition Survey

In responding to the quantitative and qualitative methods used in this study, it was necessary to develop two instruments: The Student Perception Transition Survey

and the interview questions. As authors from other dissertations had to gather information when developing their instruments, the researcher also had to examine various instruments in order to capture the essence of the four variables analyzed in this study. All instruments used in the study were modified to relate to African American male students' transitional experiences.

After a review of literature and examination of five instruments, the researcher developed a 52-item Student Perception Transition questionnaire (Appendix A). The instruments examined were the (a) Student's Perceptions Survey Instrument (Kindle, 2000), (b) Spring Independent School District Transition Survey (Simpson, 2002), (c) Teacher Treatment Inventory Scale (Webley, 2002), (d) Self-Perceptions of Schools, Peers, and Academic Achievement Survey Subscale (Irving, 2002), and (e) Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (2nd ed.) (Piers & Herzberg, 2002). There was not a single instrument that comprehensively measured the social, emotional, physical, and academic variables; therefore, a compilation of all the surveys reviewed was necessary to effectively measure the four variables.

All items were rated on a four-point Likert-like scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Eight questions from the social aspects section were compiled from the Student Perceptions Survey Instrument (Kindle, 2000). The Spring Independent School District Transition Survey (Simpson, 2002) comprised three questions in the academic aspect section while ten questions were selected from the Teacher Treatment Inventory Scale (Webley, 2002). Seven emotional aspect questions were obtained from the Self-Perceptions of Schools, Peers, and Academic Achievement Survey Subscale

(Irving, 2002). Six questions that pertained directly to the physical aspect section were adapted from the Piers-Harris 2 (Piers & Herzberg, 2002).

The remaining 18 questions were gathered from a review of literature on African American males. A review of African American male literature to formulate these 18 questions was necessary to fully capture a more in-depth understanding of the African American male's perception of social, emotional, physical, and academic aspects. All questions were modified to properly measure the perception of African American male students' transition from elementary school to middle school. The 18 questions were dispersed among the four areas. More specifically, there were 7 questions in the social aspect section, 7 questions in the emotional aspect section, 2 questions in the physical aspect section, and 2 questions in the academic aspect section.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections: social, emotional, physical, and academic. Items within each section were randomly ordered into subcategories. The first section on social aspects was divided into three categories: school climate, perceived treatment by teachers, and parental support. The second section, emotional aspects, was divided into two categories: peers and school success. All questions in the third section were geared toward the African American male's perception of his physical attributes such as body size and appearance. The last section on academic aspects was divided into two areas: teacher expectations and instructional strategies.

The validity of this student questionnaire was determined by having an independent behavioral science researcher evaluate this custom-made instrument. This validity assessment ensured that (a) the inventory of 52 questionnaire items was

sufficient to capture all important aspects of the student transition from elementary to middle school, (b) the common four-point Likert response scale was adequate to reflect a student's accurate perception on all items addressed in the questionnaire, and (c) the questionnaire format was in keeping with the best practices in questionnaire design.

Interview Questions

The following ten questions were developed to answer the sixth research question: How do African American male students describe their transitional experience from elementary school to middle school?

1. Tell me what the environment at school was like during sixth grade.
2. What meant the most to you during sixth grade?
3. What bothered you the most about sixth grade?
4. What kind of relationship did you have with most of your teachers?
5. Tell me something about your favorite teacher.
6. What was it about this teacher that made him/her your favorite?
7. Tell me something about your least favorite teacher.
8. What was it about this teacher that made him/her your least favorite?
9. What were your favorite classes? Why?
10. Describe your feelings about the transition to middle school.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted on a campus not identified in the study but located in the same region and district. The Student Perception Transition Survey instrument was administered in January 2004 to 15 seventh grade African American male students.

Feedback provided by students on the instrument's readability and understanding was used to improve the survey instrument and its implementation.

The participants were asked to review the questionnaire and make comments regarding interpretation of items, clarity of directions, and organization. The students suggested that the survey be read by the researcher and explanations given on a few questions. These suggestions were implemented. Overall, students said the survey was appropriate for seventh grade African American males.

From a measurement perspective, the pilot test was the primary strategy used to meet the reliability requirements associated with questionnaire design. Specifically, the pilot test and subsequent revisions ensured that seventh grade African American male students had (a) a consistent (common) understanding of what was asked in individual questionnaire items and (b) a consistent (common) perspective regarding the use of the four-point Likert response scales.

Sampling and Data Collection

An initial phone call explaining the research was followed by a letter personally presented to the superintendents of each school district in January 2004 (Appendix B). Upon approval to proceed with research, the principals of the six identified campuses were notified by telephone and in writing to arrange a personal visit and discuss the best format for distribution of the parental permission forms (Appendix C). Although six schools were contacted, five agreed to participate in the study. The researcher conducted a meeting with seventh grade African American male students in the morning before school or during advisory/homeroom at schools A, B, D, and E. A meeting with three

seventh grade language arts teachers was convened on February 6, 2004, with School C to explain the research.

Seventh grade students at Schools A, B, D, and E were given a parental permission form (Appendix D) and student assent form (Appendix E) to return within one week of dispersement by the researcher. An explanation and importance of the study was conveyed to the students by the researcher or designee. Each seventh grade language arts teacher at School C distributed the forms to African American males in their classes. Dates were established on each campus for the researcher or designee to administer the survey to students returning the form with signed consent.

Announcements were made daily to remind students of returning the signed parental permission forms. Surveys were color coded by school to maintain a distinction between schools. Upon completion, each survey was assigned a letter to correspond with the master list of students participating in the study.

Questionnaire Administration

Table 3.3 shows that the survey was administered the first time to 12 students of school A's population, 13 students of school B's population, 15 students of school C's population, 14 students of school D's population, and 23 students of school E's population.

Table 3.3. Administration of Survey

School	Target Population	Sample Population 1st Admin.	2nd Admin.	Total	Percentage of Participation
School A	77	12	26	38	49.3
School B	48	13	15	28	58.3
School C	46	15	3	18	39.1
School D	49	14	12	26	53.1
School E	77	23	16	39	50.6
Total	297		149		50.2

Due to low returns, principals from the five participating schools were once again contacted. Schools A, B, D, and E's seventh grade African American male students not participating in the first administration of the survey were revisited. The parental permission forms were mailed to parents of students at School C who were nonparticipants during the first administration of the survey. The importance of data collection in this particular study was relayed to them once again. Table 3.3 also shows that the second administration of the survey was given to 26 students of school A's population, 15 students of school B's population, 3 students of school C's population, 12 students of school D's population, and 16 students of school E's population.

After the second administration of the survey, the total participation of seventh grade African American male students is depicted in Table 3.3. The total sample population of participants in this study by schools is 49.3% of school A's population, 58.3% of school B's population, 39.1% of school C's population, 53.1% of school D's

population, and 50.6% of school E's population. Overall 50.2% of the target population participated in this study.

Interview Strategy

Two students from each campus were selected to participate in an audiotaped interview. Selection of these students was based on the data collected from the survey. Students with the most positive transitional experiences and students with the least positive transitional experiences comprised the data collected through audiotaped interviews. These students were given a parent audiotape consent form and a student audiotape assent form (Appendix F & G) to return within two days of dispersement. Students returning the forms participated in an interview that lasted approximately 15-30 minutes. The interviews were conducted at each campus. All interviews were taped and transcribed.

Students were asked a series of questions about their transition from elementary school to middle school (Appendix H). Follow-up questions were asked as responses were given.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

The trustworthiness and credibility of this inquiry were determined by peer debriefing and an inquiry audit as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Peer debriefing was conducted by utilizing an experienced educator who questioned emerging thematic units from the data collected during the interviews and free-response question. Once the interviews and the free-response answers were transcribed, an inquiry audit was initiated. This audit consisted of a professional educator reviewing the tapes to ensure

exact wording was correct on the transcript. An audit trail was established that included the tape recordings, transcripts, 3x5 index cards, free-response surveys, and the structure of thematic units.

Quantitative Analysis of Data

Quantitative data were obtained through the administration of a 52-item questionnaire entitled, the Student Perception Transition Survey. Results of the study were reported using descriptive analysis such as frequency and percentage. Tables were used to present findings. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to perform statistical analysis. The data were organized in the following six steps.

Step One: Coding the Data

The data analysis consisted of first creating and applying a coding system for each questionnaire (a) individually for overall results and (b) school-by-school. This was completed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Responses were notated for each question.

Step Two: Generating the Overall Response Distribution

Response distributions were constructed by using the SPSS for each of the 52-questionnaire items. These distributions are documented in Appendices I, J, K, and L. Values were assigned as identifiers for each response. For example: “1” was identified as strongly agree, “2” was identified as agree, “3” was identified as disagree, and “4” was identified as strongly disagree.

Step Three: Applying the Decision Rule to Overall Results

Percentages of the response distributions were examined in terms of agree, uncertain, and disagree. The data reported as strongly agree and agree were combined to form the agree responses. The disagree and strongly disagree were combined to form the disagree response. Percentages recorded as 60% or greater for agree were assigned agree. Percentages recorded as 60% or greater for disagree were assigned disagree. Percentage responses 59% or lower for agree or disagree were assigned uncertain. Trend statements were then created by applying a decision rule to each of the initial questionnaire item distributions. Applying the decision rule provides summary statistics that can be used to construct meaningful trend statements. These statements acknowledging agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement for each of the questionnaire items are reported in Chapter IV.

Step Four: Generating School-by-School Response Distributions

Response distributions were constructed by using the SPSS for each of the five schools in the sample. These distributions are documented in Appendix M. Values were assigned as an identifier for each response. For example: “1” was identified as strongly agree, “2” was identified as agree, “3” was identified as disagree, and “4” was identified as strongly disagree.

Step Five: Applying the Decision Rule to School-by-School Data

Percentages of the response distributions were examined in terms of agree, uncertain, and disagree. The data reported as strongly agree and agree were combined to form the agree responses. The disagree and strongly disagree were combined to form the

disagree response. Percentages recorded as 60% or greater for agree were assigned agree. Percentages recorded as 60% or greater for disagree were assigned disagree. Percentage responses 59% or lower for agree or disagree were assigned uncertain. Trend statements were then created by applying a decision rule to each of the initial questionnaire item distributions. School-by-school trends were created for each of the four major constructs addressed in the instrument. These trends involved a comparison of findings for each of the five schools in the sample. These comparative results are also presented in Chapter IV.

Qualitative Analysis of Data

Qualitative data were collected from (a) interviews and (b) one free-response question from the individual questionnaires. Data were reported as narrative units. Data were transcribed. Student responses were placed on 441 3x5 index cards. The cards were sorted into thematic units. The data were organized into the following steps.

Part One – Ten Interviews

Step One: Transcribing Interview Data

The data analysis first consisted of transcribing the ten interviews into a word document. Upon completion of the transcription, each interview was notated as A-J.

Step Two: Sorting Into Themes

Responses were transposed onto 328 3x5 index cards. The index cards were then sorted into categories based on student responses. Themes began to emerge that allowed the researcher to organize Chapter V.

Step Three: Coding Interview Response Data

Responses of interviews were coded using the following format (Appendix N):

1. The first slot was the interviewee's letter.
2. The second slot was the page number from the transcript.
3. The third slot was the line number from the transcript where the statement was located.

Part Two – Free-Response Answers

Step One: Transcribing Free Response Data

Of the possible 149 students, 58 responded to the free-response question from the questionnaire. The data analysis first consisted of transcribing the free-response answers.

Step Two: Sorting Into Themes

Free-response answers were transposed onto 113 3x5 index cards. The index cards were then sorted into categories based on student responses. Themes began to emerge that are discussed in Chapter V.

Step Three: Coding Free Response Data

Responses of the free-response answers were coded using the following format (Appendix N):

1. The first slot indicated free response (FR).
2. The second slot was the page number on the transcript.
3. The third slot was the line number from the transcript where the statements were located.

CHAPTER IV

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

This chapter provides the quantitative findings for the five research questions in this study. Chapter IV is divided into seven parts. Part one provides an overview of the structure used in data analysis. Parts two through six provide the summary response for each of the five research questions. The final part provides the synthesis for the findings elaborated in parts two through six.

Structure for Data Analysis

Figure 4.1 links each of the five research questions to the actual 52-questionnaire items explored in the quantitative part of this study. For example, the first research question dealing with African American male students' perceptions of the social aspect in their transition from elementary school to middle school involves the analysis of 15 questionnaire items that are organized into three item groups. These groups are school climate, perceived treatment, and parental support. The other four panels in Figure 4.1 can be reviewed in a similar manner. With this overview at hand, findings for each research question are given below.

Research Question One

What are the African American male students' perceptions of social aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?

The response to research question one dealing with the social aspect of transition from elementary school to middle school is presented in four sections. The first three sections explore the three domains that comprise the social aspect construct: school

Figure 4.1. Structure for Data Analysis.

Research Question One: What are the African American male students' perceptions of **social aspects** in their transition from elementary school to middle school?

School Climate (Seven Questions/Items 1 to 7)	7
Perceived Treatment by Teachers (Six Questions/Items 8 to 13)	6
Parental Support (Two Questions/Items 14 and 15)	2
Total Items	15

Research Question Two: What are the African American male students' perceptions of **emotional aspects** in their transition from elementary school to middle school?

School Success (Nine Questions/Items 16 to 24)	9
Peers (Five Questions/Items 25 to 29)	5
Total Items	14

Research Question Three: What are the African American male students' perceptions of **physical aspects** in their transition from elementary school to middle school?

Physical Attributes (Eight Questions/Items 30 to 37)	8

Research Question Four: What are the African American male students' perceptions of **academic aspects** in their transition from elementary school to middle school?

Teacher Expectations (Eight Questions/Items 38 to 45)	8
Instructional Strategies (Seven Questions/Items 46 to 52)	7
Total Items	15

Research Question Five: What is the difference in the social, emotional, physical, and academic aspects as they relate to each of the five middle schools?

The first four research questions deal with student responses for all five schools taken collectively. The fifth research question is used to compare these questionnaire responses (a) at the school level and (b) for each of the four major questionnaire constructs. The data analysis structure for research question five uses the following design to link each of the 52-questionnaire items to its major questionnaire construct:

Social Aspect	15 Items
Emotional Aspect	14 Items
Physical Aspect	8 Items
Academic Aspect	15 Items
Total	52 Items

climate, perceived treatment by teachers, and parental support. The fourth section shares the overall findings for this construct.

School Climate

The findings for the seven school climate concerns are given in Table 4.1 in terms of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement. Students agreed that in comparison to fifth grade, they were more involved in school activities. Students were uncertain about being more welcome at the schools. There was disagreement concerning sixth grade being safer, sixth grade school being cleaner, sixth grade providing more meaningful non-academic programs/clubs, and that sixth grade faculty/staff were more caring. These transitional males also found it more difficult to locate their sixth grade classes.

Table 4.1. Trends for Questionnaire Items on School Climate (Expressed as a Comparison of Sixth Grade to Fifth Grade)

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status		
Item #	Item Concern	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
1	Safer in school			*
2	More welcome in school		*	
3	School cleaner			*
4	School cared more about me			*
5	More meaningful non-academic programs and clubs			*
6	Easier to find classes			*
7	More involved in school activities	*		
	Total	1	1	5

Perceived Treatment by Teachers

The findings for the six perceived treatments by teachers concerns are given in Table 4.2 in terms of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement. Compared to fifth grade, students felt middle school teachers were more sensitive toward racial/ethnic fairness. According to the data, sixth grade students were unsure when it came to sixth grade teachers being more helpful and more understanding of their needs. Students also appeared to be indecisive about being more respected by and more cared for by their sixth grade teachers. Students disagreed that they were less frustrated about their sixth grade teachers' expectations.

Table 4.2. Trends for Questionnaire Items on Perceived Treatment by Teachers in School (Expressed as a Comparison of Sixth Grade to Fifth Grade)

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status		
Item #	Item Concern	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
8	More respected by teachers		*	
9	More caring teachers		*	
10	More helpful teachers		*	
11	More understanding of student needs		*	
12	Less frustrated about teacher expectations			*
13	School more sensitive to racial/ethnic fairness	*		
	Total	1	4	1

Parental Support

Table 4.3 provides the findings for the two parental support concerns. In this section, sixth grade students believed that their parents/guardians were more active in their adjustment and more involved in their sixth grade school activities.

Table 4.3. Trends for Questionnaire Items on Parental Support (Expressed as a Comparison of Sixth Grade to Fifth Grade)

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status		
Item #	Item Concern	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
14	More active in student's adjustment	*		
15	More involved in schooling activities	*		
	Total	2	0	0

Summary

Table 4.4 elaborates the overall status for each of the 15 concerns addressing the social aspects of transition from elementary school to middle school. These items are summarized below in terms of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement.

Students **agreed** with 4 of the 15 items pertaining to social aspects. Compared to fifth grade, the area of agreement in the school climate domain was that students felt more involvement in sixth grade school activities. In the perceived treatment domain, students agreed sixth grade schools were more sensitive to racial/ethnic fairness. The other two agreement items came from the parental support domain. Specifically, sixth

grade students thought their parents/guardians were more active in their sixth grade adjustment and more involved in sixth grade school activities.

Table 4.4. Summary Trends for Questionnaire Items on Social Aspects

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status		
Item #	Item Concern	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
School Climate				
1	Safer in school			*
2	More welcome in school		*	
3	School cleaner			*
4	School cared more about me			*
5	More meaningful non-academic programs and clubs			*
6	Easier to find classes			*
7	More involved in school activities	*		
	Subtotal	1	1	5
Perceived Treatment by Teachers				
8	More respected by teachers		*	
9	More caring teachers		*	
10	More helpful teachers		*	
11	More understanding of student needs		*	
12	Less frustrated about teacher expectations			*
13	School more sensitive to racial/ethnic fairness	*		
	Subtotal	1	4	1
Parental Support				
14	More active in student's adjustment	*		
15	More involved in schooling activities	*		
	Subtotal	2	0	0
	Total	4	5	6

There was **uncertainty** by students for 5 of the 15 items. Four of these items reside in the perceived treatment by teachers' domain. Students were unsure of sixth grade teachers respecting them more, being more helpful, more caring, and more understanding of their needs. The final item came from the school climate domain that yielded uncertainty by students that in comparison to fifth grade they felt more welcome in sixth grade.

Students **disagreed** with the remaining six items. Specifically, in the school climate domain, students did not believe that in sixth grade they were safer in school, the school was cleaner, sixth grade teachers cared more about them, that sixth grade provided more meaningful non-academic programs and clubs, and that sixth grade classes were easier to find. The final item came from the perceived treatment domain that resulted in students being more frustrated in sixth grade compared to fifth grade concerning teacher expectations.

Research Question Two

What are the African American male students' perceptions of emotional aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?

The response to research question two dealing with the emotional aspect of transition from elementary school to middle school is presented in three sections. The first two sections examine the two domains that comprise the emotional aspect construct: school success and peers. The third section shares the overall findings for this construct.

School Success

The findings for the nine school success concerns are given in Table 4.5 in terms of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement. Students agreed that in comparison to fifth grade, they were more fearful of requesting their wants and needs in the sixth grade. Compared to fifth grade, students were indecisive about belonging more, having more success, having fewer weaknesses than strengths, felt school was more of a waste of time, having more self-doubt, and felt that studying was more futile to receiving good grades. Based on the data, there was disagreement in the area of feeling more of a failure and that they learned more about African American contributions in sixth grade.

Table 4.5. Trends for Questionnaire Items on School Success (Expressed as a Comparison of Sixth Grade to Fifth Grade)

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status		
Item #	Item Concern	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
16	Belonged more at school		*	
17	Felt more successful		*	
18	Felt more of a failure			*
19	Felt fewer weaknesses than strengths		*	
20	Felt more afraid to request wants and needs	*		
21	Felt more self-doubt in decision-making		*	
22	Felt school more waste of time		*	
23	Felt studying more would not get good grades		*	
24	Felt learned more about African American contributions			*
	Total	1	6	2

Peers

The findings for the five peer concerns are given in Table 4.6 in terms of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement. Compared to fifth grade, students agreed they had fewer friends when successful in sixth grade. There was uncertainty in being teased more about doing well in sixth grade. Students disagreed that they felt more competent than their sixth grade peers, felt friends were more important, and failed to participate more in sixth grade classes.

Table 4.6. Trends for Questionnaire Items on Peers (Expressed as a Comparison of Sixth Grade to Fifth Grade)

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status		
Item #	Item Concern	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
25	Felt more competent			*
26	Felt friends more important			*
27	Teased more about doing well		*	
28	Failed to participate more in class			*
29	Fewer friends when successful	*		
	Total	1	1	3

Summary

Table 4.7 elaborates the overall status for each of the 14 concerns addressing the emotional aspects of transition from elementary school to middle school. These items are summarized below in terms of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement.

Table 4.7. Summary Trends for Questionnaire Items on Emotional Aspects

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status		
Item #	Item Concern	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
School Success				
16	Belonged more at school		*	
17	Felt more successful		*	
18	Felt more of a failure			*
19	Felt fewer weaknesses than strengths		*	
20	Felt more afraid to request wants and needs	*		
21	Felt more self-doubt in decision-making		*	
22	Felt school more waste of time		*	
23	Felt studying more would not get good grades		*	
24	Felt learned more about African American contributions			*
	Subtotal	1	6	2
Peers				
25	Felt more competent			*
26	Felt friends more important			*
27	Teased more about doing well		*	
28	Failed to participate more in class			*
29	Fewer friends when successful	*		
	Subtotal	1	1	3
	Total	2	7	5

Students **agreed** with 2 of the 14 items pertaining to emotional aspects. The area of agreement in the social success domain was that students felt more afraid to request their wants and needs in sixth grade compared to fifth grade. Another item of agreement

in the peers' domain yielded that students felt they had fewer friends when successful in sixth grade.

There was **uncertainty** by students for 7 of the 14 items. The school success domain revealed uncertainty by students in comparison to fifth grade as to whether they belonged more at their sixth grade school, felt more successful, had fewer weaknesses, had more self-doubt, felt school was more of a waste of time, and felt studying more would not yield good grades. In the peers' domain, students were indecisive about being teased more about doing well in sixth grade compared to fifth grade.

Students **disagreed** with the remaining five items. In the school success domain, students did not feel more of a failure and felt they did not learn more about African American contributions in sixth grade. Students also disagreed in the peer domain that they felt more competent than their counterparts, their friends were more important, and that they failed to participate more in class.

Research Question Three

What are the African American male students' perceptions of physical aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?

The response to research question three dealing with the physical aspect of transition from elementary school to middle school is presented in one section. This section explores the one domain that comprises the physical aspects construct: physical attributes.

Physical Attributes

The findings for the eight physical attributes concerns are given in Table 4.8 in terms of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement. Students agreed that in sixth grade they were more popular with girls, considered themselves nicer looking, had a more pleasant face, and were physically stronger than in fifth grade.

There was uncertainty as to whether their looks bothered them more, their hair was nicer, and that they were bigger than most kids in sixth grade. Based on the data, students disagreed that they had more sleep in sixth grade compared to fifth grade.

Table 4.8. Trends for Questionnaire Items on Physical Attributes (Expressed as a Comparison of Sixth Grade to Fifth Grade)

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status		
Item #	Item Concern	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
30	More popular with girls	*		
31	More bothered by looks		*	
32	Nicer hair		*	
33	Considered themselves more nice looking	*		
34	More pleasant face	*		
35	Physically stronger	*		
36	Bigger than most kids		*	
37	More sleep			*
	Total	4	3	1

Research Question Four

What are the African American male students' perceptions of academic aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?

The response to research question four dealing with the academic aspect of transition from elementary school to middle school is presented in three sections. The first two sections examine the two domains that comprise the academic aspects construct: teacher expectations and instructional strategies. The third section shares the overall findings for this construct.

Teacher Expectations

The findings for the eight teacher expectations concerns are given in Table 4.9 in terms of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement. Students agreed that in comparison to fifth grade, sixth grade teachers had higher expectations for them completing assignments. Compared to fifth grade, students were unsure about whether teachers gave more praise for trying, asked if students understood the work more, gave more explanation of the rules, admonished students more for incorrect answers, and were more helpful in sixth grade. There was disagreement about sixth grade teachers praising more for correct answers and that sixth grade African American male students had more appropriate academic placement.

Table 4.9. Trends for Questionnaire Items on Teacher Expectations (Expressed as a Comparison of Sixth Grade to Fifth Grade)

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status		
Item #	Item Concern	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
38	More teacher praise for trying		*	
39	Higher expectations for completing assignments	*		
40	Asked more if work was understood		*	
41	More explanation of rules		*	
42	Admonished more for incorrect answers		*	
43	Praised more for correct answers			*
44	Teachers more helpful		*	
45	More appropriate academic placement			*
	Total	1	5	2

Instructional Strategies

The findings for the seven instructional strategies concerns are given in Table 4.10 in terms of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement. According to the data, students agreed that they were provided more varied teaching techniques and that their needs were addressed more in sixth grade compared to fifth grade. There was uncertainty about sixth grade teachers giving more feedback, spending more time working with students, being more understanding of their learning styles, giving more homework, and providing less individual instruction.

Table 4.10. Trends for Questionnaire Items on Instructional Strategies (Expressed as a Comparison of Sixth Grade to Fifth Grade)

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status		
Item #	Item Concern	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
46	More teacher feedback		*	
47	More time spent working with students		*	
48	More understanding of learning styles		*	
49	More varied teaching techniques	*		
50	More homework		*	
51	More needs addressed	*		
52	Less individual instruction		*	
Total		2	5	0

Summary

Table 4.11 elaborates the overall status for each of the 15 concerns addressing the academic aspects of transition from elementary school to middle school. These items are summarized below in terms of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement.

Students **agreed** with 3 of the 15 items pertaining to academic aspects. The area of agreement in the teacher expectations domain was that students felt teachers had higher expectations for them completing assignments in sixth grade compared to fifth grade. Two items of agreement in the instructional strategies domain yielded that students felt that teachers used more varied teaching techniques and addressed their needs more in sixth grade.

Table 4.11. Summary Trends for Questionnaire Items on Academic Aspects

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status		
Item #	Item Concern	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
Teacher Expectations				
38	More teacher praise for trying		*	
39	Higher expectations for completing assignments	*		
40	Asked more if work was understood		*	
41	More explanation of rules		*	
42	Admonished more for incorrect answers		*	
43	Praised more for correct answers			*
44	Teachers more helpful		*	
45	More appropriate academic placement			*
	Subtotal	1	5	2
Instructional Strategies				
46	More teacher feedback		*	
47	More time spent working with students		*	
48	More understanding of learning styles		*	
49	More varied teaching techniques	*		
50	More homework		*	
51	More needs addressed	*		
52	Less individual instruction		*	
	Subtotal	2	5	0
	Total	3	10	2

There was **uncertainty** by students for 10 of the 15 items. The teacher expectations domain revealed uncertainty by students that in comparison to fifth grade, sixth grade teachers praised them more for trying, asked if students understood the work

more, gave more explanation of the rules, were admonished more for incorrect answers, and were more helpful to students. In the instructional strategies domain, students were unsure if sixth grade teachers compared to fifth grade teachers gave more feedback, spent more time working with students, understood their learning styles, gave more homework, and provided less individual instruction.

Students **disagreed** with the remaining two items. In the teacher expectations domain, sixth grade students did not feel they were praised more for their correct answers and were placed more appropriately academically.

Research Question Five

What is the difference in the social, emotional, physical, and academic aspects as they relate to each of the five middle schools?

The response to research question five dealing with the difference in the social, emotional, physical, and academic constructs as they relate to each of the five middle schools is presented in four sections. Each section focuses on a comparative school-by-school analysis for a single construct.

Social Aspect

The school-by-school findings for the social aspect construct are given in Table 4.12 in terms of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement. When the student responses are disaggregated to create individual distributions for each of the five middle schools, these individual school distributions for the social aspect construct differ from the aggregate analysis for research question one presented earlier in this chapter.

Table 4.12. School-by-School Trends for the Social Aspect Construct (Expressed as a Comparison of Sixth Grade to Fifth Grade)

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status by School					Overall
Item #	Item Concern	A	B	C	D	E	Agreement
School Climate							
1	Safer in school	D	D	D	D	D	D
2	More welcome in school	U	U	D	D	U	U
3	School cleaner	U	D	D	D	U	D
4	School cared more about me	D	D	A	D	D	D
5	More meaningful non-academic programs and clubs	D	D	U	U	D	D
6	Easier to find classes	D	D	D	D	D	D
7	More involved in school activities	A	D	U	A	D	A
Perceived Treatment by Teachers							
8	More respected by teachers	U	U	U	U	A	U
9	More caring teachers	D	U	U	U	U	U
10	More helpful teachers	U	A	D	D	U	U
11	More understanding of student needs	U	D	U	U	U	U
12	Less frustrated about teacher expectations	D	D	D	D	D	D
13	School more sensitive to racial/ethnic fairness	A	D	D	A	A	A
Parental Support							
14	More active in student's adjustment	A	A	D	U	A	A
15	More involved in schooling activities	A	U	A	A	A	A

Note. A = Agreement, U = Uncertain, and D = Disagreement.

The earlier aggregate findings in Table 4.4 suggested that students agreed on four questionnaire items, disagreed on six items, and were uncertain on five items. These Table 4.4 aggregate results are repeated in the last column of Table 4.12. For comparative purposes, disaggregate findings in Table 4.12 reveal that the overall pattern does not hold true for the individual schools. This can be seen by looking at the two largest discrepancy items. Specifically, item seven suggests that only two of the five schools yielded results that are the same as the overall agreement in the last column of Table 4.12. Similarly, on item ten, only two schools yielded the same results as was indicated for the overall analysis.

On the other hand, eight items in the social aspect construct had at least four of the five schools yielding results that correspond to the overall agreement for the aggregate analysis. These are items 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, and 15.

These obvious differences between aggregate and disaggregate analysis are due in large part to two primary factors. First, there is a difference in the sample sizes for these five middle schools. Secondly, given the open middle school enrollment policy, students residing in each of the five middle schools can come from any of the school district's elementary schools. For example, middle school students in School A could have come from any one of 19 elementary schools. Thus, their references for comparing fifth to sixth grade are not linked to a single elementary school. The implications resulting from these differences are elaborated in Chapter VI in the section dealing with recommendations for practice and future research.

Emotional Aspect

The school-by-school findings for the emotional aspect construct are given in Table 4.13 in terms of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement. Once again, these disaggregated student responses for the individual school distributions dealing with the emotional aspect construct differ from the aggregate analysis for research question two presented earlier in this chapter.

Table 4.13. School-by-School Trends for the Emotional Aspect Construct (Expressed as a Comparison of Sixth Grade to Fifth Grade)

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status by School					Overall
Item #	Item Concern	A	B	C	D	E	Agreement
School Success							
16	Belonged more at school	U	D	U	U	U	U
17	Felt more successful	U	D	U	U	A	U
18	Felt more of a failure	U	D	U	D	D	D
19	Felt fewer weaknesses than strengths	U	U	A	U	U	U
20	Felt more afraid to request wants and needs	A	A	A	A	A	A
21	Felt more self-doubt in decision-making	U	D	U	U	U	U
22	Felt school more waste of time	A	U	A	U	A	U
23	Felt studying more would not get good grades	U	U	D	D	U	U
24	Felt learned more about African American contributions	U	D	D	D	D	D
Peers							
25	Felt more competent	D	D	D	D	D	D

Table 4.13 (continued)

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status by School					Overall
Item #	Item Concern	A	B	C	D	E	Agreement
26	Felt friends more important	U	D	D	D	D	D
27	Teased more about doing well	U	D	U	D	D	U
28	Failed to participate more in class	D	D	D	D	D	D
29	Fewer friends when successful	A	A	A	A	A	A

Note. A = Agreement, U = Uncertain, and D = Disagreement.

These earlier aggregate findings in Table 4.7 suggested that students agreed on 2 questionnaire items, disagreed on 5 items, and were uncertain on 7 items. These Table 4.7 aggregate results are repeated in the last column of Table 4.13. For comparative purposes, disaggregate findings in Table 4.13 reveal that the overall pattern does not hold true for the individual schools. This can be seen by looking at the two largest discrepancy items. Specifically, item 22 suggests that only two of the five schools yielded results that are the same as the overall agreement in the last column of Table 4.13. Similarly, on item 27 only two schools yielded the same results as was indicated for the overall analysis.

On the other hand, all five schools agreed with the Table 4.13 overall findings for four specific items. These were items 20, 25, 28, and 29. Near perfect agreement (i.e., at least four of the five schools having four of them identical to the overall aggregate outcome) was the result for five additional items. These were 16, 19, 21, 24, and 26.

Thus, it appears that the differences between aggregate and individual school results are fewer than that encountered in the social aspect construct.

As indicated in the discussion of the social aspect construct, this obvious difference is due to the same two factors, namely, differential sample size and the open middle school enrollment policy. Thus, their references for comparing fifth to sixth grade are not linked to a single elementary school. The implications resulting from these differences are elaborated in Chapter VI in the section dealing with recommendations for practice and future research.

Physical Aspect

The school-by-school findings for the physical aspect construct are given in Table 4.14 in terms of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement. When the student responses are disaggregated to create individual distributions for each of the five middle schools, these individual school distributions for the physical aspect construct differ from the aggregate analysis for research question three presented earlier in this chapter.

These earlier findings in Table 4.8 suggested that students agreed on four questionnaire items, disagreed on one item, and were uncertain on three items. These Table 4.8 aggregate results are repeated in the last column of Table 4.14. For comparative purposes, disaggregate findings in Table 4.14 reveal the overall pattern does not hold true for the individual school. This can be seen by looking at the two largest discrepancy items. Specifically, overall large differences are encountered for the first five items (30 to 34). On the other hand, the last three items in the physical aspect

construct (35 to 37) yield perfect to near perfect agreement between the overall aggregate result and the results for the five individual schools.

Table 4.14. School-by-School Trends for the Physical Aspect Construct (Expressed as a Comparison of Sixth Grade to Fifth Grade)

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status by School					Overall
Item #	Item Concern	A	B	C	D	E	Agreement
30	More popular with girls	A	A	U	D	A	A
31	More bothered by looks	U	U	A	U	D	U
32	Nicer hair	U	U	A	A	D	U
33	Considered themselves more nice looking	U	U	A	A	A	A
34	More pleasant face	U	U	A	D	A	A
35	Physically stronger	A	A	A	A	A	A
36	Bigger than most kids	D	U	U	U	U	U
37	More sleep	D	D	D	D	D	D

Note. A = Agreement, U = Uncertain, and D = Disagreement.

Again, these same two factors can account for an observed difference between aggregate and disaggregate data. These differences will also be discussed in Chapter VI in the section dealing with recommendations for practice and future research.

Academic Aspect

The school-by-school findings for the academic aspect construct are given in Table 4.15 in terms of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement. Once again, these disaggregated student responses for the individual school distributions dealing with the

academic aspect construct differ from the aggregate analysis for research question four presented earlier in this chapter.

Table 4.15. School-by-School Trends for the Academic Aspect Construct (Expressed as a Comparison of Sixth Grade to Fifth Grade)

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status by School					Overall
Item #	Item Concern	A	B	C	D	E	Agreement
Teacher Expectations							
38	More teacher praise	D	U	D	U	U	U
39	Higher expectations for completing assignments	A	U	A	U	A	A
40	Asked more if work was understood	U	U	U	U	A	U
41	More explanation of rules	U	A	U	A	A	U
42	Admonished more for incorrect answers	U	U	U	U	U	U
43	Praised more for correct answers	D	A	D	D	D	D
44	Teachers more helpful	U	U	U	A	A	U
45	More appropriate academic placement	D	U	D	U	U	D
Instructional Strategies							
46	More teacher feedback	D	U	D	U	U	U
47	More time spent working with students	U	D	U	U	U	U
48	More understanding of learning styles	U	U	U	A	A	U
49	More varied teaching techniques	A	A	A	A	A	A
50	More homework	U	U	A	D	U	U

Table 4.15 (continued)

Questionnaire Item		Agreement Status by School					Overall
Item #	Item Concern	A	B	C	D	E	Agreement
51	More needs addressed	A	U	U	A	A	A
52	Less individual instruction	A	U	U	U	U	U

Note. A = Agreement, U = Uncertain, and D = Disagreement.

These earlier aggregate findings in Table 4.11 suggested that students agreed on 3 questionnaire items, disagreed on 2 items, and were uncertain on 10 items. For comparative purposes, disaggregate findings in Table 4.15 reveal that the overall pattern does not hold true for the individual schools. This can be seen by looking at the two largest discrepancy items. Specifically, item 41 suggests that only two of the five schools yielded results that are the same as the overall agreement in the last column of Table 4.15. Similarly, on item 45, only two schools yielded the same results as was indicated for the overall analysis.

On the other hand, perfect or near perfect agreement between the overall results and the individual school results can be seen in the Table 4.15. These results are items 40, 42, 43, 47, 49, and 52.

As was the case for the three previous constructs, these same two factors can account for observed differences between aggregate and disaggregate data. These differences will also be reviewed in Chapter VI in the section where recommendations for practice and future research will be specified.

Summary

The results presented in Tables 4.12 to 4.15 can be summarized in two tables that capture both agreement and disagreement for the comparative analysis on the 52-questionnaire items.

Consistent findings for 26 of the 52-questionnaire items yielded near perfect agreement (four of five school results corresponded to the aggregate results) or perfect agreement (all five schools replicated the aggregate results) are presented in Table 4.16. These consistent findings are subdivided into three groups that reflect the types of agreement. For example, 5 items reflect agreement with questionnaire items as they were worded in the questionnaire. Similarly, 10 items reflect disagreement with questionnaire wording, and in addition, 11 items yielded a consistent uncertainty response given the wording of these questionnaire items.

Table 4.16. School-by-School Consistent Findings for 26 Questionnaire Items (Expressed as a Comparison of Sixth Grade to Fifth Grade)

Questionnaire Aspect	Item #	Item Concern
Consistent Agreement (5 Items)		
Social	15	More active in student's adjustment
Emotional	20	Felt more afraid to request wants and needs
Emotional	29	Fewer friends when successful
Physical	35	Physically stronger
Academic	49	More varied teaching techniques

Table 4.16 (continued)

Questionnaire Aspect	Item #	Item Concern
Consistent Disagreement (10 Items)		
Social	1	Safer in school
Social	4	School cared more about me
Social	6	Easier to find classes
Social	12	Less frustrated about teaching expectations
Emotional	24	Felt learned more about African American contributions
Emotional	25	Felt more competent
Emotional	26	Felt friends more important
Emotional	28	Failed to participate more in class
Physical	37	More sleep
Academic	43	Praised more for correct answers
Consistent Uncertainty (11 Items)		
Social	8	More respected by teachers
Social	9	More caring teachers
Social	11	More understanding of student needs
Emotional	16	Belonged more at school
Emotional	19	Felt fewer weaknesses than strengths
Emotional	21	Felt more self-doubt in decision-making
Physical	36	Bigger than most kids
Academic	40	Asked more if work was understood
Academic	42	Admonished more for incorrect answers

Table 4.16 (continued)

Questionnaire Aspect	Item #	Item Concern
Academic	47	More time spent working with students
Academic	52	Less individual instruction

Inconsistent findings emerged from the comparative analysis undertaken in response to research question five. Specifically, 26 of the 52-questionnaire items yielded inconsistent results across the five schools. Table 4.17 identifies these 26 items that are grouped by the four constructs. Inspection of this table reveals that inconsistent findings emerged for 7 of the 15 social aspect construct items, 5 of the 14 emotional aspect items, 5 of the 8 physical aspect items, and 9 of the 15 academic aspect items.

Table 4.17. School-by-School Inconsistent Findings for 26 Questionnaire Items (Expressed as a Comparison of Sixth Grade to Fifth Grade)

Questionnaire Aspect	Item #	Item Concern
Social	2	More welcome in school
	3	School cleaner
	5	More meaningful non-academic programs and clubs
	7	More involved in school activities
	10	More helpful teachers
	13	School more sensitive to racial/ethnic fairness
	14	More active in student's adjustment

Table 4.17 (continued)

Questionnaire Aspect	Item #	Item Concern
Emotional	17	Felt more successful
	18	Felt more of a failure
	22	Felt school more waste of time
	23	Felt studying more would not get good grades
	27	Teased more about doing well
Physical	30	More popular with girls
	31	More bothered by looks
	32	Nicer hair
	33	Considered themselves more nice looking
	34	More pleasant face
Academic	38	More teacher praise
	39	Higher expectations for completing assignments
	41	More explanation of rules
	44	Teachers more helpful
	45	More appropriate academic placement
	46	More teacher feedback
	48	More understanding of learning styles
	50	More homework
	51	More needs addressed

CHAPTER V

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

> I have many things I want to say but – No one will listen. I have many things I want to do but – No one will let me. There are so many places I want to go but – No one will take me. And the things I write are corrected but – No one reads them. Who am I? A sixth grader. (Wiles & Bondi, 1993, p. 36)

As the principal of a middle school, the researcher has witnessed firsthand the conflicts that the African American male students normally have with the school administrators, teachers, and with their fellow students. These conflicts arise when these students want their voices to be sympathetically heard by the school community. On the other hand, the school authorities do not seem to be adequately prepared to help these African American students in this transition period and facilitate their adjustment in their middle school years. As an attempt to understand this conflict, the subject of this chapter is the qualitative findings about this group of students as a response to question six "How do African American male students describe their transitional experience from elementary school to middle school?"

Method of Qualitative Research

The qualitative research result comes from a study done on ten African American male students from five different middle schools from southeast Texas: two students from each school. Their selection was based on responses given on the 52-questionnaire survey. One student from each campus who perceived an extremely positive transition was invited to participate. One student from each campus who perceived an extremely negative transition was invited to participate. These ten African American male students

and their parents consented to participate in this segment of the study. When I solicited the help of African American males to participate in the interview phase, they were eager. However, as students were interviewed, they failed to elaborate about their experiences. A few students were concerned about the schools learning their identity; therefore, they were hesitant to reveal information even after being reassured by the researcher that they would not be identified. This is an example of Kunjufu's (1984) statement of the fourth grade syndrome. Students are eager to participate in school at first and then once they are in our educational system for a relatively short time, their enthusiasm is quashed.

In addition to the interviews, all 149 students participating in the survey had the opportunity to write down additional information concerning their transitional experience through an open-ended question on the survey. Only 58 of the 149 chose to elaborate in writing concerning their transition to middle school.

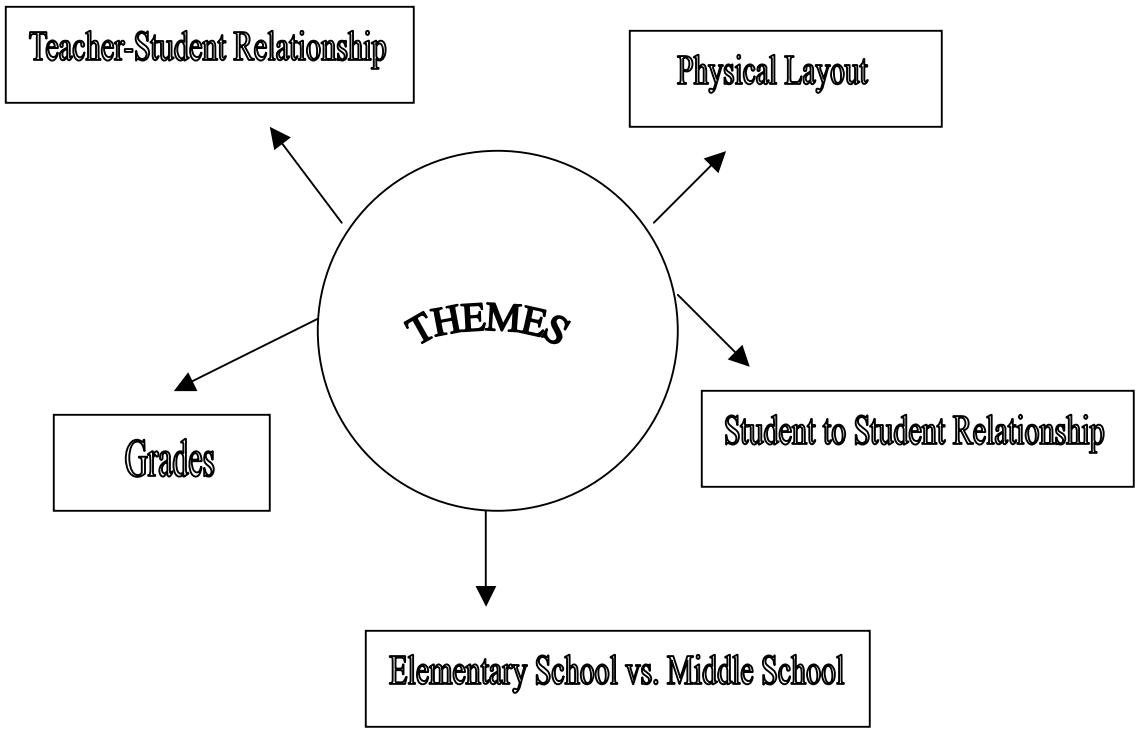
This chapter is divided into three parts. Part one conveys the voices of the ten African American male students interviewed. Part two presents the responses from 58 of the 149 students who provided information when answering the open-ended response question in the questionnaire. Part three will illustrate the similarities and differences in the responses from the interviews and open-ended responses.

Findings of the Data for the Ten Students

The findings of the data for the ten students interviewed are illustrated in Figure 5.1. Analysis of the data revealed the following five emerging themes: (a) physical

layout and general environment, (b) student-to-student relationship, (c) teacher-student relationship, (d) grades, and (e) elementary school versus middle school.

Figure 5.1. Categories of Emerging Themes From Interviews.



Physical Layout and General Environment

School climate is an essential element of a true middle school. Schools must provide a warm, caring environment for students to learn and prosper (Hanna, 1998). School climate shapes the students' attitudes and cognitions about themselves and, in turn, contributes to their outcomes (Loukas & Robinson, 2004). African American males gain particular benefits from perceptions of a positive school climate (Kuperminc,

Leadbetter, & Blatt, 2001). One particular component of school climate is the physical layout of the building.

Cotterell (1982) and Freiberg (1998) discuss that the size and physical layout of a school are initial concerns and can add or detract from the health of the learning environment. While interviewing African American males, the following areas of school climate emerged: hallways, lockers, cafeterias, classrooms, and safety. The following areas will shed further light on the perception these African American males had as they pertain to the school's physical layout.

Hallways

As I walked down the hallways of the middle schools participating in this study, three of the five had very narrow passages for the number of students found walking to their next class. One of the five middle schools was a newer building with larger halls. Another of the middle schools was a renovated high school, which explained the wide hallways compared to three of the other middle schools.

One aspect that was voiced by the students was how they were required to walk down the hallways. In elementary school, the students were escorted single file down the hallway to their destination. During the passing periods in middle school, students were allowed to walk the halls without being escorted, and students made comments about this when they referred to a rule established for hallway passing. One student best describes this rule by declaring: "I did not like the rules. You had to walk up and down on the right side" (J21.915-916). One of the participating schools had placed a red line of tape down the center of the hallway as a divider to remind students to walk to the right.

Lockers

Lockers were an issue with all ten students. All five schools had metal lockers that were located on both sides of the halls in various locations of the school. At the beginning of the school year, students were assigned lockers and locks for the entire year. There is a certain way to manipulate the combination for it to open. If you leave the lock on the last number of the combination, someone can easily open your locker. One student interviewed responded by saying: “In the fifth grade, we did not have a locker” (C4.145). Because of this reason, students considered middle school to be more difficult and had a challenging time finding their lockers at first. Another student acknowledged that: “The first six weeks I had a hard time because I couldn’t open it. But when I kept getting familiar with it, then I started opening it” (I19.833-834).

Cafeteria

Nutrition is so important in schools today. Lunch time is considered a socialization period. Many of the students interviewed described the cafeteria in middle school as bigger than elementary school. One student pointed out that in: “Fifth grade you knew when you were going to eat lunch, but in the sixth grade, you didn’t” (C5.202-203).

Lunch time changed every other day in three of the five middle schools depending on the class you attended during lunch time. Four of the five middle schools’ lunches were 30 minutes each day per grade level. One of the five schools had a rotating lunch schedule for approximately two hours due to the large number of students and the size of the cafeteria. In middle school, students were brought into the cafeteria and

seated at assigned tables. The same student remarked: “You had to get out of your seat and go eat” (C5.205).

Classrooms

The majority of sixth grade teachers decorated their classrooms. However, some teachers did not. One student defined middle school classrooms by exclaiming: “They did not look so good to me” (G14.632). Middle schools are larger facilities and elective classes may be found anywhere in the building. All students indicated that the core classes were located in one area of the building for easier access. One student elaborated: “It was easy because your classes were right there” (B2.69). Another student stated that his classes were located: “in the sixth grade part” (J21.924). While another student disclosed that: “There were some classes outside and you had to search for them” (B2.70).

One student gave the example of: “P.E. and band classes are way out there” (E10.432). The same student also declared: “That you had less than five minutes to get to other classes” (E10.424). One student indicated: “I like changing classes because in fifth grade, you had to stay in one class. One class was boring” (C4.152-153).

Safety

The perception of safety in schools is a critical issue. In Chapter IV, African American male students overwhelmingly felt their school was not safe. Clearly, the threat of violence against children in American is real, and problems in communities spill over into schools. While schools continue, statistically, to be one of the safest places for children, there should not be a tolerance for violence at school. Furthermore, it

is my position that the assurance and ultimate responsibility for our children's safety is the responsibility of each individual school's administrator. "Every student will attend a school that is safe and secured, one that is free of fear and to learning" (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2002). Safety in the schools includes any behavior that violates a school's mission or climate of respect or jeopardizes the intent of the school to be free of aggression against persons or property, drugs, weapons, and disorder (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2002).

Unfortunately, educators are forced to operate under almost ridiculous circumstances. If there is to be a light at the end of the tunnel, it is our responsibility to hold the torch high enough to provide a beacon of light bright enough and strong enough for our children to follow (Public School Parent's Network, 2004).

Safety and security needs, the second level of Maslow's (1970) Hierarchy of Needs Model, derives from the desire for a peaceful, smoothly running, stable society. It is difficult to concentrate on studying or teaching when you are frightened. Before students can learn, they must first feel safe and secure (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). One student best describes his feelings about middle school safety: "That he was told to tell the principal if someone was messing with him. But even though you were told to tell, it really wasn't that safe because you still have students that fight and pick" (B2.63-65). As a result, perceptions of safety are vital to the African American male student's academic success.

Student-to-Student Relationship

Peer groups replace family and school as the most influential factor on adolescent behavior in their movement from childhood to membership in the larger culture (Blos, 1941). Group opinion and approval or disapproval of peers becomes progressively the most influential force in motivating adolescent conduct. But the peer group also offers security as the adolescent moves from the familiarity of family into the unknowns of adulthood (Dilg, 1999). Friends also have qualities that students pride in having themselves. Friends provide the group camaraderie that boys yearn for (Ferguson, 2003). Students expressed comments about their friends:

> I had lots of friends from elementary school (A1.6).
>
> The first six weeks I was very quiet. The second six weeks I got a lot of friends (C4.183-184).
>
> I was getting to meet new friends (D8.332).

It has been suggested that poor relations between groups that are almost the same are highly charged. Among groups where similarities threaten to obliterate uniqueness, identity, and self-preservation are secured by stressing differences, and this can produce more inflamed interactions (Dilg, 1999). Several students give voice to their feelings of peers:

> You had all these kids from different backgrounds (B3.130).
>
> They act tough. Everywhere you look they wanted to fight (E14.636).

Teacher-Student Relationship

Teachers are an integral part of a student's academic career. A student's perception of his teachers' expectations and behavior will have a lasting effect well into

adulthood. Teachers' expectations are the most important factors impacting academic achievement (Kunjufu, 1989). Good teaching is crucial to effective schooling. The overriding mission of schools is to help students learn and to direct them toward productive lives as good citizens. Teachers do this by their instruction and example (Roney, 2001). Doda, George, and McEwin (1987) developed five truths about effective middle school teachers. First, effective middle level teachers do not sit down while they teach. Secondly, effective teachers work to create lessons that bring students as close to the real thing as possible. Thirdly, they have a sense of humor. Fourth, effective teachers think big, but teach small. With middle school students, this is an option for quality versus quantity. Finally, effective teachers work to weasel their way into the hearts of the young adolescents they teach.

While interviewing seventh grade African American males, five categories pertaining to teacher-student relationships emerged: relationship with teachers, perception of teachers, differential teacher treatment, teacher instruction, and grades.

Relationship With Teachers

Teacher-student relationships are factors affecting students' perception of school (Holliday, 1985). Developing a positive relationship is critical to the survival of a student. Students spend approximately 38 hours with teachers weekly. The quality of teacher-pupil relationships is central to achievement by boys (Bleach, 1998). The perceived relationship between student and teacher has a great impact on a student. Five of the ten students interviewed described having a good relationship with their teachers. One student made the following comment about his positive relationship: "I had a good

one because they knew my brother" (A1.21). One student proclaimed the following about his positive relationship with his teachers: "I stayed out of trouble" (H17.764).

On the other hand, the remaining five students expressed having a bad relationship with teachers. One student voiced that: "The teacher was mean, and I did not like him" (C5.215). The same student continued expressing that: "They were given too much homework" (C5.215). Further comments were continued by adding that: "Teachers would tell other teachers to say, 'Be quiet.' They would come in there and say, 'shut up – don't say nothing.' They would always want to touch on somebody or something" (C5.219-221).

The division of the ten students on perceived teacher treatment follows along with what was found in Chapter IV data. Students were uncertain as to whether their teachers respected them, cared for them, were more helpful, and understood their needs. Following are African American male students' overall perception of their teachers.

Perception of Teachers

All students have their least favorite teachers. There are many reasons why students choose teachers to put on their least favorite list. One student discusses a teacher who talks more about her personal life than teaching. The student expresses: "She always talks about her husband and she never teaches nobody. She is always saying something about her husband taking things from her. She always shows off (C6.248-250).

Other reasons cited deal with how the teacher acts toward the student. As stated earlier in Chapter II, the rapport between the teacher and the African American male

student must be established for learning to be accomplished (Addison & Westmoreland, 1999). Terms such as "mean" and "yelling" surfaced during the interviews. One student noted that: "She is very strict about everything" (D8.364).

Another student proclaimed that the teacher:

> Changed. He was real good at first. He started being mean. Giving all kinds of work just like he felt like it. On our sixth week report, if we didn't pass, we just failed and he barely taught us. We had to do it on our own without knowing what to do (E10.450-453).

Yet another student stated: "She would go over a lesson one time and I didn't hear, she would go on to the next lesson. I didn't understand it at all" (G16.686-687).

Further statements included:

> He was loud. I like Science, but the teacher was kind of loud. Like he would go give you something kind of hard and would go over it once and only once. If you didn't understand it, he would go onto the next thing (H18.778-180).

Another student declared: "She's mean and stuff. She yells at us" (I20.881).

While this student recounted what happens with his teacher: "Whenever I talk, she would send me to Coach. When someone else talked, she wouldn't send them nowhere – just put them outside and paddle them herself" (J22.965-966). Statements such as these are a distraction from the teachers' main focus of teaching. Instead of listening to the teacher, students are dwelling on what they perceived as differential teacher treatment and become disinterested and uncooperative. On the other hand, teachers who foster positive perceptions from students will illicit cooperation and attentiveness in class. Following are African American male students' perceptions of their teachers.

Positive Perception of Teachers

As students spoke about their favorite teachers, the terms "caring" and "helpfulness" resounded through their responses. This is what these students had to say about their favorite teachers:

> She was a real nice teacher. The class is easy. She teaches real good and doesn't just give us assignments. She teaches before we do them. She would read out problems in class (A1.26-30).
>
> I really didn't like the subject, but I liked the teacher because she was really nice and explained everything. She used to care for everybody and take time to explain what to do (B3.93-95).
>
> She gives us time to think about stuff. She always lets us work in partners. When homework time, she does not pack up the homework. She goes on with it (C6.233-236).
>
> She was really, really nice and would work with you until you got an understanding before going to the next assignment (H17.769-770).
>
> She always was on my side and stuff. She would do stuff for all of us (I20.872-873).
>
> Whenever I need help all I had to do is go up to her desk (J22.965).

Differential Teacher Treatment

A critical component of the relationship is how children perceive their teachers' treatment of them (Marcus, Gross, & Seefeldt, 1991). Students feel that teachers do not like or care for them based on the way they are treated. Here is one student's account about his treatment from teachers. Because of this treatment, he concluded that the teacher didn't like him. He stated that if students like him "were to get in trouble, she would holler at us; but if other students were to get in trouble, she wouldn't mind them talking and stuff" (B3.104-105). He continued by saying: "It was because she thought

that we weren't very important. If we would talk out loud, she would write us up or something" (B3.106-109).

Teacher Instruction

Bleach (1998) discovered that the types of lessons disliked by adolescent males were passive, individual tasks that involved sitting and writing, copying from the board, and reading books. Addison and Westmoreland (1999) stated varied teaching methodology is more beneficial than the traditional, repetitive methodology. Three students discussed the instruction of their teachers:

> We had to do it on our own without knowing what to do. On our sixth week report, if we didn't pass we just failed and he barely taught us (E10.452-453).
>
> Stand up and tell us how to do it and give us worksheets (F13.552).
>
> He would go give you something kind of hard and would go over it once and only once if you didn't understand it, he would go on to the next thing (H18.779-780).

Bleach (1998) also found that adolescent males did not dislike learning. What affected their enjoyment of lessons was whether and how often they were offered opportunities for active involvement. This is affirmed by the following comments concerning science:

> Worked in groups and enjoyed it (H18.784,788).
>
> We did experiments and projects (C6.270, F13.584).
>
> It was a lot of fun and we did a lot of projects (G15.677).

Grades

Every three weeks, students receive numerical grades in the form of progress reports or report cards from their teachers to report on their progress in class. Students

interviewed viewed grades as important indicators of their self-worth in each class. Following are students' accounts of their grades in elementary school:

> They were pretty high (H17.744).
>
> My grades were important to me in elementary school because I was an A and "B" student (B2.74-76, G15.653).

Once students reached middle school, their grades began to change. This sentiment is accurately voiced through the following comments:

> When I got to middle school, something changed (B2.77).
>
> Some were good. Some were bad (C5.192).
>
> First six weeks they were high 80's to 90's (I19.846).
>
> I went to C's and D's (C5.192).
>
> Bad grades on my report card (G15.649).
>
> Second six weeks, they got low, but I pulled them back up (I19.846-947).

Elementary School Versus Middle School

As stated earlier by Eccles et al. (1993) in Chapter II, this period for adolescents can be a time of increased stress that can significantly affect adjustment. The following students revisit their experiences after arriving onto the middle school campus:

> The first six weeks I was very quiet and shy at the time (B4.183, D9.391).
>
> It was very scary and nervous. I did not know anybody at this school (D9.383, C7.279).
>
> It felt kind of different. We had one teacher in elementary and five in middle school (J22.1001, G16.716, J23.1010, J.23.1014).

When students enter the building for the first time, they would stay grouped with students from other elementary schools. The middle school environments are different in

routine classes, room make-up, and overall structure. Many middle schools are larger than elementary school, presenting student with larger social networks and challenges, and creating a lengthy adjustment period for them.

During school transition, students' lives become stressed, anxious, and distraught. This anxiety may be brought on by changes in environment, school programs, organizational, structure, and social interactions. These stresses complicate students learning processes: lower their confidence and their overall self-worth.

Elementary schools and teachers often tend to be more task-oriented in their teaching. In middle school, however, the goal of teaching often becomes spent on teaching the curriculum at a pace so that all the material is taught before the six weeks test. Learning is still important; however, students are concentrating more on consequence and complaints about class work as these students express:

> Middle school is more difficult because you get SAC (A.2.53).
>
> There are times you should be serious (H.18.811).
>
> They give too much work (C7.286).

After students became more familiar with their surroundings, they become more at ease with the rules and regulations of the schools. They begin to feel part of the school and were more attentive to the different teachers' methods of teaching. African American male students had to deal with not only a new building and multiple teachers, but also had to learn a new culture and rules.

> I started to get to know everybody (D9.387).
>
> I had been in elementary so long; I did not know how to act when I came to middle school (J22.1001-1002).

You had to wear your shirt tucked in and had to wear white shirts (J22.1006).

The transition students make during their years of schooling are usually major events in their lives. The anxiety and stress created by these transitions can be minimized when the surroundings are responsive to the students. Middle school is a whole new ball game – and a tough transition for many kids, but those interviewed, did say that "they made it."

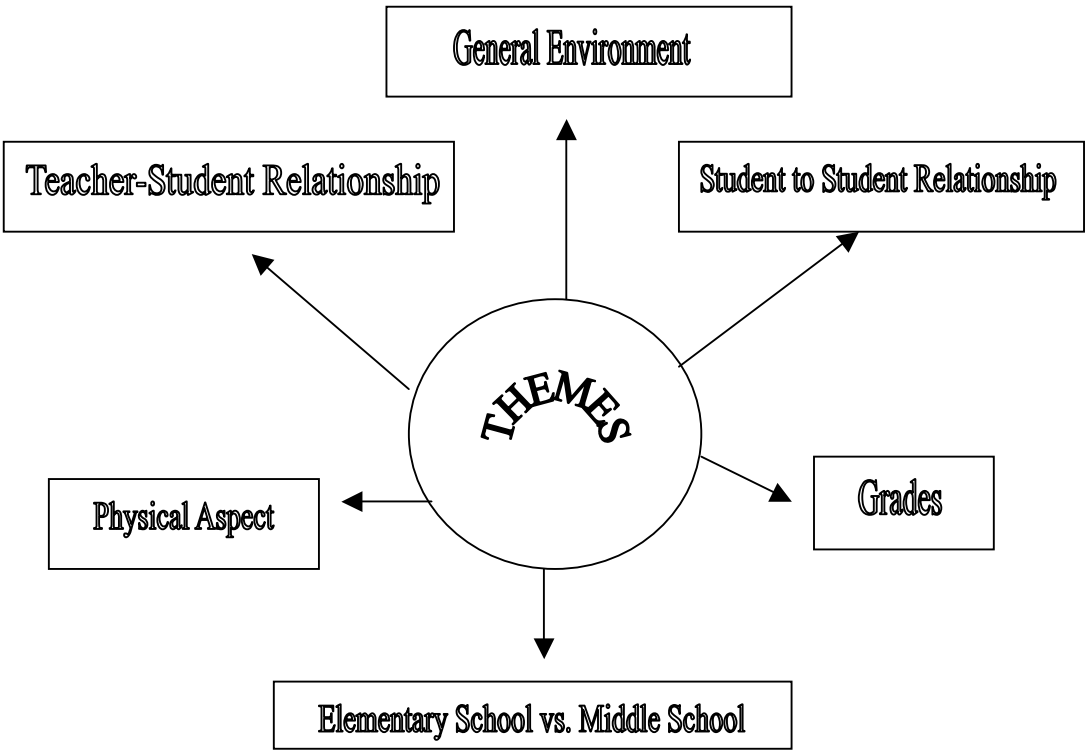
Free-Response Question

The findings of the data for the ten students interviewed are illustrated in Figure 5.2. Analysis of the data revealed the following six emerging themes: (a) general environment, (b) student-to-student relationship, (c) physical aspect, (d) teacher-student relationship, (e) grades, and (f) elementary school versus middle school.

General Environment

The general environment included safety, a welcoming atmosphere, and building cleanliness. One student stated that: "I felt more safe at grade school than junior high school" (FR23.1029). Another student did not feel welcome because there were a lot of people and he had never been to a middle school before. One student described middle school: "as being junky because there were a lot of kids" (FR23.1035). Chapter IV data concurs with the fact that African American students felt unwelcome in their schools during sixth grade.

Figure 5.2. Categories of Emerging Themes From Free-Response Question.



As far as cleanliness, one student stated: "that elementary school was cleaner and nicer" (FR23.1034) and "I thought it was a small school, but it was bigger than what I thought" (FR25.1135).

Student-to-Student Relationship

Fitting in

Middle level students' emotions are fragile. One event can ruin a student's entire life for several days. Throughout adolescence, middle level students struggle with self-concept. They focus on the aspects of themselves that they do not like and conclude that nobody else likes those features or them either (Campbell, 1992).

> It is hard in middle school to fit in, be popular, and have people like you (FR24.1081).
>
> When I came here, it felt like everyone was teasing or picking at me (FR25.1115).
>
> Fights would start almost everyday (FR23.1016).
>
> It's hard when you cry yourself to sleep at night asking why can't I fit in? (FR24.1082-1083).
>
> I was nervous and felt unwanted (FR24.1089).
>
> Some days when I am in school, I feel like going back to first grade or day care for the rest of my life (FR24.1072-1073).
>
> Why doesn't anybody like me now? (FR24.1082-1083).
>
> Sixth grade is hard, but I made it through (FR19-867-868).

Physical Aspect

The physical changes that occur in adolescence affect not only middle school students' physical abilities, but also impact their self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence, social relationships, moods, and their approach to learning in school (Allen, Splittgerber, & Manning, 1993). One student stated: "My body was changing and I was having different feelings" (FR25.1138)

If students feel insecure about their physical development and abilities, they may lack self-confidence (Swafford & Bryan, 2000). According to Tashakkori and Thompson (1991), African American adolescents have higher self-esteem than their White counterparts.

> My reputation is real good now especially with the girls (FR24.1064).
>
> I would want to look nice to impress a girl or a group of people (FR25.1139).

Teacher-Student Relationship

Differential Teacher Treatment

The relationship between differential teacher treatment and differing educational outcomes is dependent on the students' perceptions of the treatment. Reality depends on one's perception of the world. Reality exists in that individual's perception. If African American students perceive unequal treatment, then that perception is the reality (Marcus et al., 1991). This sentiment is expressed by the following accounts of teacher treatment:

> Sometimes it seems teachers don't care about any student of my race. My friends tell me the same thing (FR25.1117-1118).
>
> Teachers are racial. They don't like Black people (FR23.1032).
>
> Another student stated:
>
> That teachers are always in my business. They try to front me. They treat the girls and other boys better than they treat me (FR24.1059-1060).
>
> Teachers don't listen to us (FR25.1144).
>
> They take a side and when we ask questions, they would not answer (FR26.1145).

Homework/Sleep

According to Bleach (1998), African American males see little value in homework or in the way it could contribute to their overall progress at their present stage of schooling. Most boys see homework as an invasion of their personal time, especially if they think that too much is prescribed. This sentiment is accurately expressed in the following statement: "I have so much homework that I barely even go to sleep" (FR26.1146).

Grades

The traditional way in which teachers have reported their evaluation to students and parents is through grading or marking systems, most often represented by the familiar A, B, C, D, and F. Students voice their opinions about their grades in elementary school:

> When I was in elementary school, I made straight A's (FR26.1177).
>
> I made better grades in fifth than in sixth (FR26.1166).

Teachers face a common dilemma over determining academic grades. There's tension between the desire for students to be successful on one hand, and society's expectations that teachers maintain high academic standards on the other. It is very important for the young adolescent's identity formation process to have lots of successes and to receive recognition and respect from peers and adults for their accomplishments (Stevenson, 1998). When these same students reach middle school, there is a difference noted in the comments made by students concerning their grades:

> When I got to middle school, I didn't think that I was going to pass (FR26.1183).
>
> When I first got to middle school, I did just pass (FR25.1129).
>
> My grades started to slip (FR25.1113).
>
> Later when I got adjusted, I did better (FR25.1129).
>
> Sometimes the work in sixth grade is easy, and it could be hard (FR24.1079).
>
> When coming to middle school, I thought I was going to pass. Instead I ended up failing sometimes and wouldn't often pass (FR24.1093-1094).

Elementary School Versus Middle School

Elementary school and middle school are different in their overall structure. As a result, there are mixed emotions expressed by students transitioning. Following are students' comments concerning elementary school versus middle school.

> Elementary school was more fun and easy (FR23.1029, FR23.1031, FR25.1123, FR26.1181).
>
> Elementary school was better than middle school. We would have recess and longer free time (FR24.1053, FR25.1107, FR25.1108).
>
> We went on more trips in elementary school than in middle school (FR26.1160).

Once students enter their new schools, emotions begin to overwhelm them. Many students may experience anxiety due to fear of the unknown. However, as students journey further into their sixth grade year, many begin to adjust due to familiarity. This is best stated by the following comments.

> When I came from elementary school, I felt scared about going to a different school but I have gotten used to it (FR23.1022, FR25.1141).
>
> At first, I felt real nervous about changing into a school on the other side of the town. But it was worth the while. It started to get a little better (FR24.1065, FR25.1119).
>
> When I got to middle school, the pace was a lot faster and more challenging (FR26.1183, FR26.1170).
>
> It was hard; it wasn't challenging, but it was different (FR25.1121, FR26.1154).

Some of the students interviewed voiced positive differences in middle school as it relates to their elementary experiences.

> Elementary school was fun, but not as much as middle school (FR23.1051).
>
> Elementary school was good for me, but middle school was better (FR23.1043, FR24.1068).

During sixth grade, we went more trips than fifth (FR26.1164).

I am taking care of myself better than in elementary school (FR25. 1099, FR23.1039).

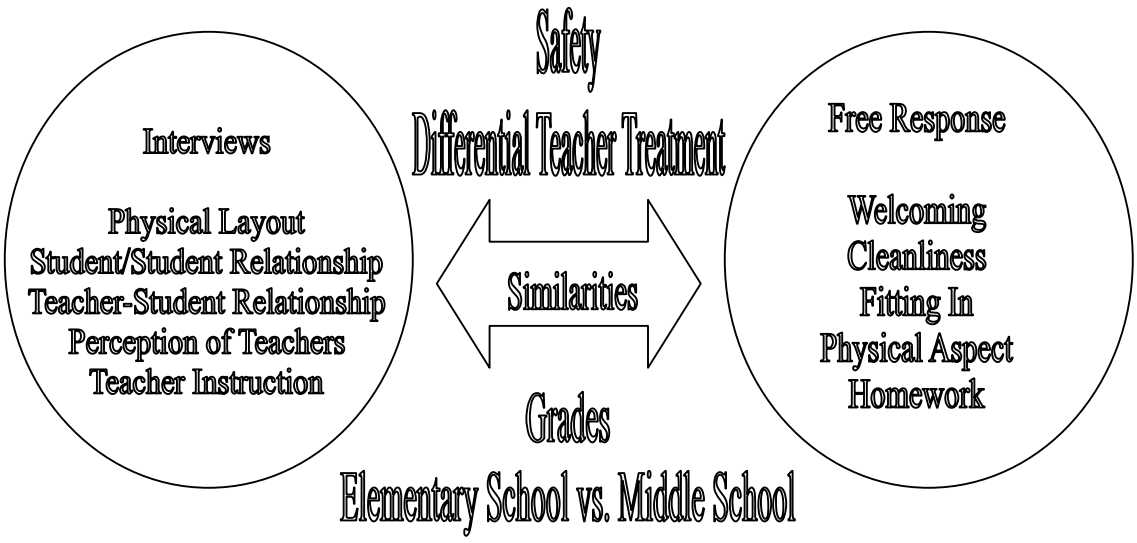
I learned more and had more teachers (FR23.1047, FR24.1068).

I was doing better in middle school than elementary school because I am in more activities (FR24.1096).

Summary

The data in Figure 5.3 depict the similarities and differences in the statements gathered through students' interviews and the free-response question in the 52-item questionnaire. The main areas of similarities are safety, differential teacher treatment, grades, and elementary school versus middle school. Students who shared their experiences agreed that safety was an important issue. Differential teacher treatment had an impact on their transition from elementary school to middle school. Grades were higher in elementary school and became lower after they began middle school. Respondents gave a litany of experiences that constituted elementary school versus middle school.

Figure 5.3. Similarities and Differences in Interviews and Free-Response Question.



The data also revealed differences in the responses gathered from these two modes: interviews and the free-response question. Interviews disclosed information concerning the impact of the school's physical layout on the students' transition to middle school. Relationships between students were also discussed. Teacher relationships with students, their perception of teachers, and teacher instruction were vital areas in their transition from elementary school to middle school.

Themes from the free-response question that were different are the lack of a welcoming feeling and cleanliness in middle school. Students passionately gave accounts of the negative impact that trying to fit in had on their transition to middle school. Physically, male students were confident when it came to females. Homework was discussed as too much and caused students to have fewer hours of sleep.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final chapter of this inquiry provides a synthesis of all operations undertaken in this study. It is divided into three parts. Part one reviews the purpose and research design. Part two provides a summary of the empirical findings for the quantitative and qualitative components of this study. Part three elaborates the recommendations for both practice and future research.

Purpose and Design

Quantitative Component

This study was designed to examine four variables that impact the African American male students' perceptions of their transition from elementary school to middle school. The guiding questions for focusing the quantitative component of this study were:

1. What are the African American male students' perceptions of social aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?
2. What are the African American male students' perceptions of emotional aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?
3. What are the African American male students' perceptions of physical aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?
4. What are the African American male students' perceptions of academic aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?

5. What is the difference in the social, emotional, physical, and academic aspects as they relate to each of the five middle schools?

Qualitative Component

The qualitative portion of this study was designed to receive a more in-depth look into the African American male students' transitional experience from elementary school to middle school expressed in their own voices. The guiding question used to focus the qualitative component of this study was: How do African American male students describe their transitional experience from elementary school to middle school? The following specific interview questions were used to help develop a picture of the transitional experience.

1. Tell me what the environment at school was like during sixth grade.
2. What meant the most to you during sixth grade?
3. What bothered you the most about sixth grade?
4. What kind of relationship did you have with most of your teachers?
5. Tell me something about your favorite teacher.
6. What was it about this teacher that made him/her your favorite?
7. Tell me something about your least favorite teacher.
8. What was it about this teacher that made him/her your least favorite?
9. What were your favorite classes? Why?
10. Describe your feelings about the transition to middle school.

Target Population

The target population for this study was 149 African American male students residing in five middle schools in a single large school district in a southeastern Texas city. Each student in the sample involved the transition from 1 of 19 elementary schools into 1 of 5 middle schools.

Questionnaires and Interviews

The questionnaire used in this study was designed to reflect their individual experiences in this transition. In addition, ten students from the five middle schools were selected to participate in the audio-taped interviews.

Findings

The findings for this inquiry are summarized in two sections. The first section summarizes the questionnaire findings for the quantitative aspects of the study. The second section summarizes the findings for the qualitative aspect of the study.

Quantitative Findings

Research Question One

What are the African American male students' perceptions of social aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?

Compared to fifth grade, the area of agreement in the school climate domain was that students felt more involvement in sixth grade school activities. There was uncertainty by students whether they felt more welcome in sixth grade. Specifically, in the school climate domain, students did not believe that in sixth grade they were safer in school, the school was cleaner, sixth grade teachers cared more about them, that sixth

grade provided more meaningful non-academic programs and clubs, and that sixth grade classes were easier to find.

In the perceived treatment domain, students agreed sixth grade schools were more sensitive to racial/ethnic fairness. Students were unsure of sixth grade teachers respecting them more, being more helpful, more caring, and more understanding of their needs. Therefore, there is some doubt among these African American males as confirmed by Wyatt (2001) concerning that no matter what is accomplished, they will not be accepted by teachers, administrators, or peers. Students were more frustrated in sixth grade compared to fifth grade concerning teacher expectations.

In the parental support domains, sixth grade students thought their parents/guardians were more active in their sixth grade adjustment and more involved in sixth grade school activities. This follows along with Lee (1996) stating that adolescents receive support and nurturing within the family unit.

The social environment at the school is the social climate (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). Based on the overall data collected, these African American males were impacted negatively by the social aspects when entering sixth grade. Even though there were some positive areas such as parental support, ethnic fairness, and more involvement in activities, there was overwhelming uncertainty and disagreement in many other areas of the social aspects. African American male students felt that schools did not provide a positive school climate nor did teachers treat them with respect. However, parents were supportive of their education. Educators need to analyze their schools' overall social climate, receive input from students, and make the necessary changes to achieve success.

Research Question Two

What are the African American male students' perceptions of emotional aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?

The area of agreement in the school success domain was that students felt more afraid to request their wants and needs in sixth grade compared to fifth grade. There was uncertainty by students as to whether they belonged more at their sixth grade school, felt more successful, had fewer weaknesses, had more self-doubt, felt school was more of a waste of time, and felt studying more would not yield good grades. Students did not feel more of a failure and felt they did not learn more about African American contributions in sixth grade.

In the peers' domain, students felt they had fewer friends when successful in sixth grade. Students were indecisive about being teased more about doing well in sixth grade compared to fifth grade. Students felt they were not more competent than their counterparts, their friends were not more important, and that they participated more in class. The fact that African American male students in this study participated more in class affirms the findings by Cook and Ludwig (1997) that produced no evidence concerning "acting White" as a hindrance in learning or achievement. Based on the overall data collected, the area of emotional aspect had a negative impact on the African American male students' transition from elementary school to middle school. This meant that African American male students felt their schools did not make them feel successful and they were not equal to their peers. Lounsbury and Johnston (1988) exclaimed that adolescents felt less secure in many areas than their younger counterparts. This

sentiment was affirmed through this study. However, the perception that African American males fail to complete assignments and do not participate in classes was negated. The African American males in this study participated more in class. Educators should be cognizant of the emotional stress, such as belonging, feeling successful, and self-doubt, that these African American students encounter as they move to middle school.

Research Question Three

What are the African American male students' perceptions of physical aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?

Students agreed that in sixth grade they were more popular with girls, considered themselves nicer looking, had a more pleasant face, and were physically stronger than in fifth grade. There was uncertainty as to whether their looks bothered them more, their hair was nicer, and that they were bigger than most kids in sixth grade. Based on the data, students disagreed that they had more sleep in sixth grade compared to fifth grade. Based on the overall data collected, it was inconclusive to determine the effect physical aspects had on the African American male students' transition from elementary school to middle school. Students felt unsure of their overall physical appearance.

Research Question Four

What are the African American male students' perceptions of academic aspects in their transition from elementary school to middle school?

The area of agreement in the teacher expectations domain was that students felt teachers had higher expectations for them completing assignments in sixth grade

compared to fifth grade. There was uncertainty by students that in comparison to fifth grade, sixth grade teachers praised them more for trying, asked if students understood the work more, gave more explanation of the rules, were admonished more for incorrect answers, and were more helpful to students. Sixth grade students did not feel they were praised more for their correct answers and were placed more appropriately academically.

In the instructional strategies domain, students felt that teachers used more varied teaching techniques and addressed their needs more in sixth grade. Students were unsure if sixth grade teachers, compared to fifth grade teachers, gave more feedback, spent more time working with students, understood their learning styles, gave more homework, and provided less individual instruction. Based on the overall data collected, the area of academic aspects had a negative impact on the African American male students' transition from elementary school to middle school. African American male students felt their teachers did not give them valuable attention in class.

There were some positive points in that teachers had higher expectations for them completing assignments and teachers used more varied teaching techniques and addressed their needs; however, there was overwhelming uncertainty and disagreement in the majority of responses in this domain. Swafford and Bryan (2000) stated that instructional strategies capitalize on the unique developmental characteristics of early adolescents. These include opportunities for positive interaction with peers and teachers, participation in active hands-on tasks, and refined hypothetical and abstract thinking. Finally, the rapport between teachers and African American male students must be established for learning to be accomplished.

Educators should plainly state the classroom expectations and provide students with more experiences of success. Remember to praise students for correct answers and do not talk down to African American students and make them feel foolish for incorrect answers.

Research Question Five

What is the difference in the social, emotional, physical, and academic aspects as they relate to each of the five middle schools?

Consistent findings for 26 of the 52-questionnaire items in this part of the study yielded near perfect or perfect agreement with the results corresponding to the aggregate results across students residing in the five middle schools studied. A complete elaboration of these findings was presented in Table 4.16. Additionally, the remaining 26 questionnaire items failed to yield a consensus among the five middle schools in this study. Inconsistent results emerged from the comparative analysis of the individual middle schools. A complete elaboration of these findings was presented in Table 4.17. When looking at the trend of student responses among the five schools, African American male students shared similar feelings about the social, emotional, physical, and academic variables.

The failure to achieve consensus on all 52-questionnaire items is due in large part to two factors. First, there is a difference in the sample sizes for these five middle schools. Secondly, given the open middle school enrollment policy, students residing in each of the five middle schools can come from any of the school district's elementary schools. For example, middle school students in School A could have come from any

one of 19 elementary schools. Thus, their references for comparing fifth to sixth grade are not linked to a single elementary school.

Qualitative Findings

Research Question Six

How do African American male students describe their transitional experiences from elementary school to middle school?

Students revealed that the general layout of the buildings was fine. They did have problems at first with opening lockers; but after practice, that was resolved. Sentiments were expressed that classrooms were not very inviting in middle school. Educators should take time to make classrooms, as well all parts of the campus, more inviting and appealing with decorations.

Safety was an important concern of African American male students. Perceptions of differential teacher treatment had an impact on their transition from elementary school to middle school. Educators need to find ways to alleviate students' safety issues and develop a more positive relationship with African American males. Students perceived yelling and inconsistent application of rules as teachers and administrators not caring. However, students felt that teachers who were patient with them, explained the assignments, and varied teaching strategies had their best interests in mind.

Grades were higher in elementary school and began to drop during their sixth grade year. Due to the changes experienced from the move to middle school, educators must provide much academic support. Respondents gave a litany of experiences that constituted elementary school versus middle school.

Passionate accounts were given concerning the negative impact of trying to fit in had on their transition to middle school. Educators should become aware that African American males have emotional issues when trying to fit in. One way students mask this emotion is by posturing the "cool pose," which entails a unique speech pattern, walk, and demeanor (Davis, 2001). This is the way African American males cope but is not necessarily how they feel.

Physically, male students were confident when it came to females. Homework was discussed as too much and caused students to have fewer hours of sleep.

Based on the African American males' assessments, changes have to be made by schools as well as more understanding of African American males in the social, emotional, physical, and academic aspects. As African American males enter into middle school, they still have some of their innocence, and educators are entrusted with developing and guarding them through these formative adolescent years. If educators do not take the time to ensure the African American males' proper academic success, many failures will be in the future of these males as they journey through the school system.

Discussion of Findings

Transition to middle school is an area of potential stress (Eccles et al., 1993). The changes experienced in secondary school exert an adverse influence on adolescent functioning such as declines in academic motivation, perceived competence, intrinsic interest in school, lower levels of achievement, negative attitudes toward learning, and decreased classroom engagement (Blyth et al., 1983; Harter, 1981). Transition to middle school can be characterized by a move to a larger, more complex environment, less

emotional support from teachers, and decreased contact between students and their teachers and peers (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Simmons & Blyth, 1987).

The data collected in this study indicated there was an overall negative impact in the area of social, emotional, and academic variables on African American male students' transition to middle school. The physical aspect data revealed uncertainty of its impact on their transition. The uncertainty status for the variables aligned more with the disagreement status. While there were many variables involved in this study, the most salient areas will be discussed.

In the social aspect, safety, caring teachers, and parental support were the most salient variables. Students did not feel safe in the five participating middle schools. In this study, students referred to being "picked up," "bullied," and "fighting" as safety issues. One student best describes the lack of feeling safe by stating that "he was told to tell the principal, but it really wasn't safe because you still have students that fight and pick" (B2.63-65).

Caring teachers are important to a student's academic success. When teachers operate from care, they consciously make a moral commitment to care for and teach students, develop reciprocal relationships with them, and consider the development of the whole person (Pang, 2001). Noblit, Dwight, and McCadden (1995) defined caring as a value that may not be visible in an educational environment but ultimately guides the interactions and organization of schools and classrooms. African American males in this study were uncertain about the level of caring that their teachers exhibited toward them.

Some students commented that teachers told them to “shut up” and “don’t say anything” or that teachers yelled at them.

Parental support was evident with the students. This data strongly indicated that African American parents were concerned and involved in their child’s education. Educators should tap into this invaluable resource by getting parents more involved at school and not alienating them.

Theoretically, Hirschi’s (1969) social bonding theory concerning the more students take ownership in the school and activities, the less likely they will violate rules. Unsatisfying social interactions can prevent involvement and commitment to school and activities. Students in this study agreed that they were more involved in school activities. One student who had a positive caring relationship with a teacher stated that he stayed out of trouble because the teacher cared for him.

In the emotional aspect, the variables belonging, success, and peers were most evident. Students in this study were uncertain about belonging to the school and being successful. When applying the self-efficacy theory by Bandura (1982) to the data collected in this study, the students’ emotional experiences during their middle school transition caused them to feel they were accomplishing less in certain situations such as school assignments. Peer relationships in this study were not as influential to African American males in their transition to middle school as found in the literature by Blos (1941) and Dilg (1999). Although students commented on having many friends, they did not indicate this relationship made a significant difference in their school performance.

Physically, students felt more popular with girls and stronger than their peers. This supports more recent literature that African American males feel good about themselves. Tashakkori and Thompson (1991) found that African American adolescents exhibit high self-esteem.

Academically, students were concerned about the affirmation of teachers and less individual instruction. Once African America males transitioned to middle school, they indicated that teachers did not affirm their correct answers or acknowledge their participation in class consistently. This supports the claim by Eccles and Midgley (1989) and Simmons and Blyth (1987) that there is less support from teachers as well as decreased contact with their teachers once students transition to middle school. Based on the data collected from the questionnaire and interviews, there needs to be a restructuring of how schools receive African American males onto the middle school campuses.

Recommendations

The experience gained in conducting this inquiry leads to the generation of recommendations for both practice and future research that continue the research agenda initiated in this inquiry. Hearing the voices of African American male students is important to begin understanding their perceptions concerning the transition from elementary school to middle school.

Recommendations for Practice

Given the meaningful insight gained in this inquiry, practitioners in individual school districts should be encouraged to replicate this study in their own individual

districts. Once accurate, descriptive information emerges for a single school, the practitioners should be in an excellent position to:

1. Modify teaching practices based on African American male needs. Educators should determine the learning styles of the African American male student and develop lessons that will address the varied learning modalities these students exhibit.
2. Address African American males' safety issues and needs. A school climate survey can be administered to determine specific concerns, after which, educators can develop a plan of action to address these issues.
3. Design and implement more effective transitional programs that will provide a smooth entrance for African American males into middle school. Educators should visit with fifth grade students to determine their fears about attending middle school, as well as survey the present sixth grade students to determine what changes can be made to ease the transition.
4. Educators should focus on the positive variables indicated during the African American males' transition to middle school to promote academic success.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Since this inquiry was conducted in a single school district, its findings cannot automatically be generalized to other school districts. Thus, more informed knowledge about the transition of African American male students from elementary school to middle school can only be accomplished by first replicating this study in other school districts and then synthesizing these

findings with a view toward uncovering (or failing to uncover) common trends as it relates to social, emotional, physical, and academic variables.

2. While this study was conducted using a second semester seventh grade sample, future replication should consider using a second semester sixth grade sample. This recommendation is advanced primarily because the need to rethink their elementary school experiences will be fresher in their memories and accordingly should yield more accurate comparisons.
3. In undertaking the proposed replications, researchers should be aware of the fact that transitions could be either unique or variable. Unique transitions will occur only in cases where all elementary school students transition to a single middle school. Variable transitions will occur for all other situations, including the case in this study when an open enrollment policy was implemented.
4. A follow-up study to determine the impact of the African American school students' transition from middle school to high school should be conducted.
5. Because of the multitude of variables, educators would need to further investigate the responses of these African American students who were ambiguous to pinpoint the reasons for their concerns, such as the areas of safety and teacher-student relationships.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT PERCEPTION TRANSITION SURVEY

STUDENT PERCEPTION TRANSITION SURVEY

This survey consists of 52 statements in four areas African American male students may consider as they transition from fifth grade elementary to sixth grade middle school. Please take your time and read each item carefully. Then, circle the response that best describes the level of agreement you have about each statement.

The Social Aspect

1. I felt safer at school in 6th grade than I did in 5th grade.
   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

2. The classrooms in 6th grade had a more welcome appearance to me than the classrooms in 5th grade.
   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

3. My 6th grade school was cleaner and well kept better than my 5th grade school.
   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

4. The school cared more about me in 6th grade than in 5th grade.
   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

5. The school had more meaningful non-academic clubs and programs for me in 6th grade than in 5th grade.
   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

6. It was easier in 6th grade to find my classes than it was in 5th grade.
   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

7. I was more involved with school activities in 6th grade than I was in 5th grade.
   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

8. I was treated with more respect by teachers, administrators, and staff in 6th grade than I was in 5th grade.
   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

9. My 6th grade teachers cared more about me than my 5th grade teachers.
   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

10. Teachers in 6th grade were more helpful than my teachers in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

11. Teachers in 6th grade understood my needs better than teachers in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

12. It was less frustrating in 6th grade to know what each teacher expected of me than in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

13. Teachers, administrators, and students in 6th grade were more sensitive to racial and ethnic fairness than in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

14. Parent(s) played a significant part in my adjustment to 6th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

15. My parent(s) asked more about my schooling in 6th grade than they did in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

The Emotional Aspect

16. I felt like I belonged at my 6th grade school more than I did at my in 5th grade school.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

17. I felt more successful in 6th grade than I did in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

18. I thought of myself as a failure more in 6th grade than I did in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

19. I had fewer weaknesses than strengths in 6th grade than I had in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

20. I was often scared to request what I desired in 6th grade than I did in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

21. I doubted myself when making decisions in 6th grade more than I did in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

22. I felt going to school was a waste of time if I were a 6th grade African American male student than if I were a 5th grade African American male student.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

23. No matter how much I studied in 6th grade, I would not get good grades like 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

24. I learned more about African Americans in 6th grade than I did in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

25. I felt more competent compared to most of my 6th grade peers than I did with my 5th grade peers.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

26. My friends in 6th grade were more important to me than my friends in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

27. I was teased more about doing well by 6th grade students than I was by 5th grade students.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

28. I did not raise my hand in 6th grade classes because kids would say that I was "showing out" unlike in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

29. I had fewer friends in 6th grade than in 5th grade when I did better in school.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

The Physical Aspect

30. I was more popular with girls in 6th grade than I was in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

31. My looks in 6th grade bothered me more than they did in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

32. My hair was nicer in 6th grade than in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

33. I considered myself nice looking in 6th grade than I did in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

34. I had a more pleasant face in 6th grade than I did in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

35. I was stronger in 6th grade than I was in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

36. I was bigger than most kids in 6th grade than I was in 5th grade.
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

37. I received more hours of sleep at night in 6th grade than in 5th grade.
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

The Academic Aspect

38. My 6th grade teacher made me feel good about how hard I tried more than my 5th grade teacher.
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

39. My 6th grade teacher expected or thought that I would complete my work more than my 5th grade teacher.
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

40. My 6th grade teacher asked me if I understood the work more often than my 5th grade teacher.
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

41. My 6th grade teacher explained the rules to me better than my 5th grade teacher.
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

42. My 6th grade teacher made me feel bad when I did not have the right answer more than my 5th grade teacher.
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

43. My 6th grade teacher made me feel that I did very well when I finished reading or gave the right answer more than my 5th grade teacher.
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

44. My 6th grade teacher went out of the way to help me more than my 5th grade teacher.
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

45. My academic placement was more appropriate in 6th grade than in 5th grade.
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

46. When I gave the wrong answer, my 6th grade teacher told me how I could make my answer better more often than my 5th grade teacher.
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

47. My 6th grade teacher spent more time working with me than my 5th grade teacher.
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

48. My 6th grade teacher understood how I learned better than my 5th grade teacher.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

49. My 6th grade teacher spent time with a variety of teaching and learning activities more than my 5th grade teacher.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

50. I had more homework in 6th grade than I had in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

51. The teacher addressed my needs more in 6th grade than in 5th grade.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

52. I received less individual instruction from my teachers in 6th grade than I did with my 5th grade teachers.
    strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Respond in writing to the following question in the space provided below.

What else would you like to tell me about your transition from elementary school to middle school?

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENTS

Bettye Grigsby
6995 Salida Lane
Beaumont, Texas
Phone: (409) 866-4174 (W)
(409) 347-2139 (H)

November 19, 2003

Superintendent's Name
Name of School
Mailing Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Superintendent's name:

The purpose of this letter is to seek permission to have your school district participate in a research study entitled "African American Male Students' Perception of Social, Emotional, Physical, and Academic Variables in Their Transition From Elementary School to Middle School." This study is part of the doctoral dissertation requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Teaching. Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. The study is being conducted to determine the impact of social, emotional, physical, and academic aspects on the transition of African American males from elementary school to middle school.

The results of the study will give educators a greater insight into the African American males' perspective on factors that impact their transition from elementary school to middle school. This will allow educators to develop effective strategies that will promote a smooth transition during this period of their education.

The population involved will include seventh grade African American male students from six middle schools in the Beaumont and Port Arthur Independent School Districts. The schools will include Austin Middle School, Martin Luther King Middle School, Odom Academy, Smith Middle School, South Park Middle School, and Woodrow Wilson Middle School. Participants will be asked to complete a transition survey that will take approximately thirty minutes to complete. Additionally, two students from each campus will be selected to participate in an interview that will last approximately 30-45 minutes. The information collected in this study is confidential and names will not be used. Results will be reported by overall numbers and generic student letters in order to guarantee absolute confidentiality.

Thank you for your time and assistance in granting permission to complete this study in the Beaumont and Port Arthur Independent School Districts. I appreciate your consideration of my request and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Bettye Grigsby
Doctoral Student
Department of Teaching,
Learning, and Culture
Texas A&M University
College of Education
and Human Development

Dr. Patricia Larke
Advisor
Department of Teaching,
Learning, and Culture
Texas A&M University
College of Education
and Human Development

I have read the above and agree to have my school district participate in this research study regarding the perceptions of African American male students' transition from elementary school to middle school.

_____ _____

Superintendent's Signature Date

The study is being supervised by Dr. Patricia Larke, a professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University and with the approval of the student's doctoral committee.

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

Bettye Grigsby
6995 Salida Lane
Beaumont, Texas
Phone: (409) 866-4174 (W)
(409) 347-2139 (H)

November 19, 2003

Principal's Name
Name of School
Mailing Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Principal's name:

The purpose of this letter is to seek permission to have your school participate in a research study entitled "African American Male Students' Perception of Social, Emotional, Physical, and Academic Variables in Their Transition From Elementary School to Middle School." This study is part of the doctoral dissertation requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. The study is being conducted to determine the impact of social, emotional, physical, and academic aspects on the transition of African American males to elementary school to middle school.

The results of the study will give educators a greater insight into the African American males' perspective on factors that impact their transition from elementary school to middle school. This will allow educators to develop effective strategies that will promote a smooth transition during this period of their transition.

The population involved will include seventh grade African American male students from six middle schools in the Beaumont and Port Arthur Independent School Districts. The schools will include Austin Middle School, Martin Luther King Middle School, Odom Academy, Smith Middle School, South Park Middle School, and Woodrow Wilson Middle School. Participants will be asked to complete a transition survey that will take approximately thirty minutes to complete. Additionally, two students from each campus will be selected to participate in an interview that will last approximately 30-45 minutes. The information collected in this study is confidential and names will not be used. Results will be reported by overall numbers and generic student letters in order to guarantee absolute confidentiality. You will receive a summary of the report upon completion.

Thank you for your time and assistance in granting permission to complete this study in the Beaumont and Port Arthur Independent School Districts. I appreciate your consideration of my request and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Bettye Grigsby
Doctoral Student
Department of Teaching,
Learning, and Culture
Texas A&M University
College of Education
and Human Development

Dr. Patricia Larke
Advisor
Department of Teaching,
Learning, and Culture
Texas A&M University
College of Education
and Human Development

I have read the above and agree to have my school participate in this research study regarding the perceptions of African American male students' transition from elementary school to middle school.

_____ _____

Principal's Signature Date

The study is being supervised by Dr. Patricia Larke, a professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University and with the approval of the student's doctoral committee.

APPENDIX D

PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM

Texas A&M University
College of Education & Human Development

Parental Permission Form

I am asking for your child's participation in a research study as part of my dissertation. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University. The title of my dissertation is, "African American Male Students' Perception of Social, Emotional, Physical and Academic Variables in Their Transition From Elementary School to Middle School." I am interested in knowing how your child has made the transition from elementary school to middle school. I will be asking questions in four areas. These areas are social, emotional, physical, and academic.

Your child's participation is voluntary. If you agree to your child's participation, he will be asked to complete a questionnaire.

Dr. Patricia Larke, a professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas is supervising the study. You may contact Dr. Larke at (979) 845-8384 or Bettye Grigsby at (409) 347-2139 to answer any questions about your child's participation. The responses will be confidential and no names will be used. Results will be reported by overall numbers and each student will be assigned a letter to guarantee absolute confidentiality. The following guidelines will apply if your child participates:

- I understand my child's participation is voluntary.
- I understand that my child will be asked to complete a questionnaire.
- I understand that non-participation will not have an impact on my child's grades and there will be no consequences for not completing the questionnaire.
- I understand that my child will not be compensated for participation.
- I understand that there will not be any form of identification of my child on the questionnaire.

I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, I can contact the Institutional Review Board through Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Compliance and Administration, Office of Vice President for Research at (979) 458-4067 (mwbuckley@tamu.edu).

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to allow _____ to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____
Signature of Parent **Date**

_____ _____
Signature of Principal Investigator **Date**

Doctoral Student
Department of Teaching,
Learning, and Culture
Texas A&M University
College of Education and Human Development

APPENDIX E

STUDENT ASSENT FORM

Texas A&M University
College of Education & Human Development

Student Informed Assent

I am being invited to participate in a research study conducted by Bettye Grigsby from the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University as part of her dissertation. The title of the dissertation is "African American Male Students' Perception of Social, Emotional, Physical, and Academic Variables in Their Transition From Elementary School to Middle School." My participation will involve the completion of a questionnaire.

Dr. Patricia Larke, a professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas is supervising the study. I may contact Dr. Larke at (979) 845-8384 or Bettye Grigsby at (409) 347-2139 to answer any questions about my participation. My participation is voluntary and is not a part of school requirements. My responses will be confidential and names will not be used. Results will be reported by overall numbers and each student will be assigned a letter to guarantee absolute confidentiality. The following guidelines will apply if I choose to participate:

- My participation is voluntary.
- I understand that I will be asked to complete a questionnaire.
- I understand that non-participation will not have an impact on my grades and there will be no consequences for not completing the questionnaire.
- I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.
- I understand that I will not put my name or any form of identification on the questionnaire.

I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, I can contact the Institutional Review Board through Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Compliance and Administration, Office of Vice President for Research at (979) 458-4067 (mwbuckley@tamu.edu).

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____
Signature of Subject Date

_____ _____
Signature of Principal Investigator **Date**

Doctoral Student
Department of Teaching,
Learning, and Culture
Texas A&M University
College of Education and Human Development

APPENDIX F

PARENTAL AUDIO-TAPED PERMISSION FORM

Texas A&M University
College of Education & Human Development

Parental Permission Form
Audio-taped Interview

I am asking for your child's participation in a research study as part of my dissertation. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University. The title of my dissertation is, "African American Male Students' Perception of Social, Emotional, Physical and Academic Variables in Their Transition From Elementary School to Middle School." I am interested in knowing how your child has made the transition from elementary school to middle school. I will be asking questions in four areas. These areas are social, emotional, physical, and academic.

Your child's participation is voluntary. If you agree to your child's participation, there will be a 30-45 minute audiotaped interview by me.

Dr. Patricia Larke, a professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas is supervising the study. You may contact Dr. Larke at (979) 845-8384 or Bettye Grigsby at (409) 347-2139 to answer any questions about your child's participation. The responses will be confidential and no names will be used. Results will be reported in a story-telling format and each student will be assigned a letter to guarantee absolute confidentiality. The following guidelines will apply if your child participates:

- I understand my child's participation is voluntary.
- I understand that my child will be audiotaped during the interview.
- I understand that non-participation will not have an impact on my child's grades and there will be no consequences for not completing the interview.
- I understand that my child will not be compensated for participation.

I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, I can contact the Institutional Review Board through Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Compliance and Administration, Office of Vice President for Research at (979) 458-4067 (mwbuckley@tamu.edu).

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to allow _____ to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____
Signature of Parent **Date**

_____ _____
Signature of Principal Investigator **Date**
Doctoral Student
Department of Teaching,
Learning, and Culture
Texas A&M University
College of Education and Human Development

APPENDIX G

STUDENT AUDIO-TAPED PERMISSION FORM

Texas A&M University
College of Education & Human Development

Student Informed Assent
Audio-taped Interview

I am being invited to participate in a research study conducted by Bettye Grigsby from the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University as part of her dissertation. The title of the dissertation is "African American Male Students' Perception of Social, Emotional, Physical, and Academic Variables in Their Transition From Elementary School to Middle School." My participation will involve a 30-45 minute audiotaped interview with Bettye Grigsby.

Dr. Patricia Larke, a professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas is supervising the study. I may contact Dr. Larke at (979) 845-8384 or Bettye Grigsby at (409) 347-2139 to answer any questions about my participation. My participation is voluntary and is not a part of school requirements. My responses will be confidential and names will not be used. Results will be reported in a story-telling format and each student will be assigned a letter to guarantee absolute confidentiality. The following guidelines will apply if I choose to participate:

- My participation is voluntary.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped during the interview.
- I understand that non-participation will not have an impact on my grades and there will be no consequences for not completing the interview.
- I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.

I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, I can contact the Institutional Review Board through Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Compliance and Administration, Office of Vice President for Research at (979) 458-4067 (mwbuckley@tamu.edu).

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____
Signature of Subject Date

_____ _____
Signature of Principal Investigator **Date**

Doctoral Student
Department of Teaching,
Learning, and Culture
Texas A&M University
College of Education and Human Development

APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TRANSITION FROM ELEMENTARY TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

Interview Questions

1. Tell me what the environment at school was like during sixth grade.
2. What meant the most to you during sixth grade?
3. What bothered you the most about sixth grade?
4. What kind of relationship did you have with most of your teachers?
5. Tell me something about your favorite teacher.
6. What was it about this teacher that made him/her your favorite?
7. Tell me something about your least favorite teacher.
8. What was it about this teacher that made him/her your least favorite?
9. What were your favorite classes? Why?
10. Describe your feelings about the transition to middle school.

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR SOCIAL ASPECT

Table I1. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 1

Question 1: I felt safer at school in 6th grade than I did in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	7	5
Agree	40	27
Agreement Subtotal	**47**	**32**
Disagree	81	55
Strongly Disagree	20	13
Disagreement Subtotal	**101**	**68**
TOTAL	148	100

Table I2. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 2

Question 2: The classrooms in 6th grade had a more welcome appearance to me than the classrooms in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	17	11
Agree	61	42
Agreement Subtotal	**78**	**53**
Disagree	66	44
Strongly Disagree	5	3
Disagreement Subtotal	**71**	**47**
TOTAL	149	100

Table I3. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 3

Question 3: My 6th grade school was cleaner and well kept better than my 5th grade school.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	14	9
Agree	41	28
Agreement Subtotal	**55**	**37**
Disagree	64	43
Strongly Disagree	29	20
Disagreement Subtotal	**93**	**63**
TOTAL	148	100

Table I4. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 4

Question 4: The school cared more about me in 6th grade than in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	14	6
Agree	37	27
Agreement Subtotal	**51**	**34**
Disagree	68	49
Strongly Disagree	30	18
Disagreement Subtotal	**98**	**66**
TOTAL	149	100

Table I5. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 5

Question 5: The school had more meaningful non-academic clubs and programs for me in 6th grade than in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	9	6
Agree	40	27
Agreement Subtotal	**49**	**33**
Disagree	73	49
Strongly Disagree	26	18
Disagreement Subtotal	**99**	**67**
TOTAL	148	100

Table I6. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 6

Question 6: It was easier in 6th grade to find my classes than it was in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	8	5
Agree	41	28
Agreement Subtotal	**29**	**33**
Disagree	76	51
Strongly Disagree	24	16
Disagreement Subtotal	**120**	**67**
TOTAL	149	100

Table I7. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 7

Question 7: I was more involved with school activities in 6th grade than I was in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	49	33
Agree	66	45
Agreement Subtotal	**115**	**78**
Disagree	28	19
Strongly Disagree	4	3
Disagreement Subtotal	**32**	**22**
TOTAL	147	100

Table I8. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 8

Question 8: I was treated with more respect by teachers, administrators, and staff in 6th grade than I was in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	11	8
Agree	62	42
Agreement Subtotal	**73**	**50**
Disagree	55	37
Strongly Disagree	19	13
Disagreement Subtotal	**74**	**50**
TOTAL	147	100

Table I9. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 9

Question 9: My 6th grade teachers cared more about me than my 5th grade teachers.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	18	12
Agree	45	30
Agreement Subtotal	**63**	**42**
Disagree	69	46
Strongly Disagree	17	12
Disagreement Subtotal	**86**	**58**
TOTAL	149	100

Table I10. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 10

Question 10: Teachers in 6th grade were more helpful than my teachers in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	11	8
Agree	60	40
Agreement Subtotal	**71**	**48**
Disagree	55	37
Strongly Disagree	23	15
Disagreement Subtotal	**78**	**52**
TOTAL	149	100

Table I11. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 11

Question 11: Teachers in 6th grade understood my needs better than teachers in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	8	5
Agree	58	39
Agreement Subtotal	**66**	**44**
Disagree	60	41
Strongly Disagree	22	15
Disagreement Subtotal	**82**	**56**
TOTAL	148	100

Table I12. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 12

Question 12: It was less frustrating in 6th grade to know what each teacher expected of me than in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	8	6
Agree	21	14
Agreement Subtotal	**29**	**20**
Disagree	78	52
Strongly Disagree	42	28
Disagreement Subtotal	**120**	**80**
TOTAL	149	100

Table I13. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 13

Question 13: Teachers, administrators, and students in 6th grade were more sensitive to racial and ethnic fairness than in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	27	18
Agree	79	53
Agreement Subtotal	**106**	**71**
Disagree	32	22
Strongly Disagree	11	7
Disagreement Subtotal	**43**	**29**
TOTAL	149	100

Table I14. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 14

Question 14: Parent(s) played a significant part in my adjustment to 6th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	42	28
Agree	73	49
Agreement Subtotal	**115**	**77**
Disagree	26	18
Strongly Disagree	8	5
Disagreement Subtotal	**34**	**23**
TOTAL	149	100

Table I15. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 15

Question 15: My parent(s) asked more about my schooling in 6th grade than they did in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	39	26
Agree	66	44
Agreement Subtotal	**105**	**70**
Disagree	34	23
Strongly Disagree	10	7
Disagreement Subtotal	**44**	**30**
TOTAL	149	100

APPENDIX J

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR EMOTIONAL ASPECT

Table J1. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 16

Question 16: I felt like I belonged at my 6th grade school more than I did at my in 5th grade school.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	16	11
Agree	51	35
Agreement Subtotal	**67**	**46**
Disagree	58	39
Strongly Disagree	22	15
Disagreement Subtotal	**80**	**54**
TOTAL	147	100

Table J2. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 17

Question 17: I felt more successful in 6th grade than I did in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	17	11
Agree	59	40
Agreement Subtotal	**76**	**51**
Disagree	57	38
Strongly Disagree	16	11
Disagreement Subtotal	**73**	**49**
TOTAL	149	100

Table J3. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 18

Question 18: I thought of myself as a failure more in 6th grade than I did in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	12	8
Agree	44	29
Agreement Subtotal	**56**	**37**
Disagree	71	48
Strongly Disagree	22	15
Disagreement Subtotal	**93**	**63**
TOTAL	149	100

Table J4. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 19

Question 19: I had fewer weaknesses than strengths in 6th grade than I had in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	12	8
Agree	62	42
Agreement Subtotal	**74**	**50**
Disagree	60	40
Strongly Disagree	15	10
Disagreement Subtotal	**75**	**50**
TOTAL	149	100

Table J5. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 20

Question 20: I was often scared to request what I desired in 6th grade than I did in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	24	16
Agree	82	55
Agreement Subtotal	**106**	**71**
Disagree	36	24
Strongly Disagree	7	5
Disagreement Subtotal	**43**	**29**
TOTAL	149	100

Table J6. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 21

Question 21: I doubted myself when making decisions in 6th grade more than I did in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	13	9
Agree	51	34
Agreement Subtotal	**64**	**43**
Disagree	63	42
Strongly Disagree	22	15
Disagreement Subtotal	**85**	**57**
TOTAL	149	100

Table J7. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 22

Question 22: I felt going to school was a waste of time if I were a 6th grade African American male student than if I were a 5th grade African American male student.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	21	14
Agree	67	45
Agreement Subtotal	**88**	**59**
Disagree	49	33
Strongly Disagree	12	8
Disagreement Subtotal	**61**	**41**
TOTAL	149	100

Table J8. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 23

Question 23: No matter how much I studied in 6th grade, I would not get good grades like 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	19	13
Agree	48	32
Agreement Subtotal	**67**	**45**
Disagree	53	36
Strongly Disagree	29	19
Disagreement Subtotal	**82**	**55**
TOTAL	149	100

Table J9. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 24

Question 24: I learned more about African Americans in 6th grade than I did in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	21	14
Agree	27	19
Agreement Subtotal	**48**	**33**
Disagree	68	46
Strongly Disagree	31	21
Disagreement Subtotal	**99**	**67**
TOTAL	147	100

Table J10. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 25

Question 25: I felt more competent compared to most of my 6th grade peers than I did with my 5th grade peers.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	17	12
Agree	23	15
Agreement Subtotal	**40**	**27**
Disagree	79	53
Strongly Disagree	30	20
Disagreement Subtotal	**109**	**73**
TOTAL	149	100

Table J11. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 26

Question 26: My friends in 6th grade were more important to me than my friends in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	11	8
Agree	33	22
Agreement Subtotal	**44**	**30**
Disagree	72	48
Strongly Disagree	33	22
Disagreement Subtotal	**105**	**70**
TOTAL	149	100

Table J12. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 27

Question 27: I was teased more about doing well by 6th grade students than I was by 5th grade students.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	25	17
Agree	38	25
Agreement Subtotal	**63**	**42**
Disagree	61	41
Strongly Disagree	25	17
Disagreement Subtotal	**86**	**58**
TOTAL	149	100

Table J13. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 28

Question 28: I did not raise my hand in 6th grade classes because kids would say that I was "showing out" unlike in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	11	7
Agree	26	17
Agreement Subtotal	**37**	**24**
Disagree	71	48
Strongly Disagree	41	28
Disagreement Subtotal	**112**	**76**
TOTAL	149	100

Table J14. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 29

Question 29: I had fewer friends in 6th grade than in 5th grade when I did better in school.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	30	20
Agree	77	52
Agreement Subtotal	**107**	**72**
Disagree	27	18
Strongly Disagree	15	10
Disagreement Subtotal	**42**	**28**
TOTAL	149	100

APPENDIX K

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR PHYSICAL ASPECT

Table K1. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 30

Question 30: I was more popular with girls in 6th grade than I was in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	52	35
Agree	59	40
Agreement Subtotal	**111**	**75**
Disagree	26	17
Strongly Disagree	12	8
Disagreement Subtotal	**38**	**25**
TOTAL	149	100

Table K2. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 31

Question 31: My looks in 6th grade bothered me more than they did in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	23	15
Agree	43	29
Agreement Subtotal	**66**	**44**
Disagree	64	43
Strongly Disagree	19	13
Disagreement Subtotal	**83**	**56**
TOTAL	149	100

Table K3. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 32

Question 32: My hair was nicer in 6th grade than in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	26	17
Agree	53	36
Agreement Subtotal	**79**	**53**
Disagree	45	30
Strongly Disagree	25	17
Disagreement Subtotal	**70**	**47**
TOTAL	149	100

Table K4. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 33

Question 33: I considered myself nice looking in 6th grade than I did in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	39	26
Agree	56	37
Agreement Subtotal	**95**	**63**
Disagree	38	26
Strongly Disagree	16	11
Disagreement Subtotal	**54**	**37**
TOTAL	149	100

Table K5. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 34

Question 34: I had a more pleasant face in 6th grade than I did in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	28	19
Agree	70	47
Agreement Subtotal	**98**	**66**
Disagree	40	27
Strongly Disagree	10	7
Disagreement Subtotal	**50**	**34**
TOTAL	148	100

Table K6. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 35

Question 35: I was stronger in 6th grade than I was in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	63	42
Agree	67	45
Agreement Subtotal	**130**	**87**
Disagree	12	8
Strongly Disagree	7	5
Disagreement Subtotal	**19**	**13**
TOTAL	149	100

Table K7. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 36

Question 36: I was bigger than most kids in 6th grade than I was in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	27	18
Agree	38	25
Agreement Subtotal	**65**	**43**
Disagree	59	40
Strongly Disagree	25	17
Disagreement Subtotal	**84**	**57**
TOTAL	149	100

Table K8. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 37

Question 37: I received more hours of sleep at night in 6th grade than in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	10	7
Agree	17	12
Agreement Subtotal	**27**	**19**
Disagree	73	49
Strongly Disagree	48	32
Disagreement Subtotal	**121**	**81**
TOTAL	148	100

APPENDIX L

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR ACADEMIC ASPECT

Table L1. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 38

Question 38: My 6th grade teacher made me feel good about how hard I tried more than my 5th grade teacher.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	18	12
Agree	50	34
Agreement Subtotal	**68**	**46**
Disagree	61	41
Strongly Disagree	20	13
Disagreement Subtotal	**81**	**54**
TOTAL	149	100

Table L2. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 39

Question 39: My 6th grade teacher expected or thought that I would complete my work more than my 5th grade teacher.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	17	11
Agree	76	51
Agreement Subtotal	**93**	**62**
Disagree	40	27
Strongly Disagree	16	11
Disagreement Subtotal	**56**	**38**
TOTAL	149	100

Table L3. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 40

Question 40: My 6th grade teacher asked me if I understood the work more often than my 5th grade teacher.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	22	15
Agree	65	44
Agreement Subtotal	**87**	**59**
Disagree	41	27
Strongly Disagree	21	14
Disagreement Subtotal	**62**	**41**
TOTAL	149	100

Table L4. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 41

Question 41: My 6th grade teacher explained the rules to me better than my 5th grade teacher.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	24	16
Agree	64	43
Agreement Subtotal	**88**	**59**
Disagree	39	26
Strongly Disagree	22	15
Disagreement Subtotal	**61**	**41**
TOTAL	149	100

Table L5. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 42

Question 42: My 6th grade teacher made me feel bad when I did not have the right answer more than my 5th grade teacher.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	20	13
Agree	58	39
Agreement Subtotal	**78**	**52**
Disagree	55	37
Strongly Disagree	16	11
Disagreement Subtotal	**71**	**48**
TOTAL	149	100

Table L6. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 43

Question 43: My 6th grade teacher made me feel that I did very well when I finished reading or gave the right answer more than my 5th grade teacher.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	20	14
Agree	39	26
Agreement Subtotal	**59**	**40**
Disagree	67	45
Strongly Disagree	23	15
Disagreement Subtotal	**90**	**60**
TOTAL	149	100

Table L7. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 44

Question 44: My 6th grade teacher went out of the way to help me more than my 5th grade teacher.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	15	11
Agree	66	44
Agreement Subtotal	**81**	**55**
Disagree	47	32
Strongly Disagree	20	13
Disagreement Subtotal	**67**	**45**
TOTAL	148	100

Table L8. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 45

Question 45: My academic placement was more appropriate in 6th grade than in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	16	11
Agree	43	29
Agreement Subtotal	**59**	**40**
Disagree	58	39
Strongly Disagree	30	21
Disagreement Subtotal	**88**	**60**
TOTAL	147	100

Table L9. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 46

Question 46: When I gave the wrong answer, my 6th grade teacher told me how I could make my answer better more often than my 5th grade teacher.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	17	11
Agree	49	33
Agreement Subtotal	**66**	**44**
Disagree	59	38
Strongly Disagree	26	18
Disagreement Subtotal	**82**	**56**
TOTAL	148	100

Table L10. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 47

Question 47: My 6th grade teacher spent more time working with me than my 5th grade teacher.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	13	9
Agree	63	43
Agreement Subtotal	**76**	**52**
Disagree	57	38
Strongly Disagree	15	10
Disagreement Subtotal	**72**	**48**
TOTAL	148	100

Table L11. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 48

Question 48: My 6th grade teacher understood how I learned better than my 5th grade teacher.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	19	13
Agree	62	42
Agreement Subtotal	**81**	**55**
Disagree	47	31
Strongly Disagree	21	14
Disagreement Subtotal	**68**	**45**
TOTAL	149	100

Table L12. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 49

Question 49: My 6th grade teacher spent time with a variety of teaching and learning activities more than my 5th grade teacher.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	79	53
Agree	49	33
Agreement Subtotal	**128**	**86**
Disagree	15	10
Strongly Disagree	6	4
Disagreement Subtotal	**21**	**14**
TOTAL	149	100

Table L13. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 50

Question 50: I had more homework in 6th grade than I had in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	10	7
Agree	57	39
Agreement Subtotal	**67**	**46**
Disagree	64	43
Strongly Disagree	17	11
Disagreement Subtotal	**81**	**54**
TOTAL	148	100

Table L14. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 51

Question 51: The teacher addressed my needs more in 6th grade than in 5th grade.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	26	18
Agree	67	45
Agreement Subtotal	**93**	**63**
Disagree	46	31
Strongly Disagree	9	6
Disagreement Subtotal	**55**	**37**
TOTAL	148	100

Table L15. Distribution of Responses for Questionnaire Item 52

Question 52: I received less individual instruction from my teachers in 6th grade than I did with my 5th grade teachers.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	26	18
Agree	52	35
Agreement Subtotal	**78**	**53**
Disagree	51	34
Strongly Disagree	19	13
Disagreement Subtotal	**70**	**47**
TOTAL	148	100

APPENDIX M

DISTRIBUTION OF MAJOR QUESTIONNAIRE CONSTRUCT FINDINGS ON SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, AND ACADEMIC ASPECTS ACROSS THE FIVE SCHOOLS

Table M1. Distribution of Major Questionnaire Construct Findings on Social Aspect Across the Five Schools in the Sample

	School				
Response	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
	Percentage				
Strongly Agree	11	11	18	14	12
Agree	38	34	37	34	35
Subtotal	**49**	**45**	**55**	**48**	**47**
Disagree	36	47	34	38	38
Strongly Disagree	15	8	11	14	15
Subtotal	**51**	**55**	**45**	**52**	**53**
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100

Table M2. Distribution of Major Questionnaire Construct Findings on Emotional Aspect Across the Five Schools in the Sample

	School				
Response	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
	Percentage				
Strongly Agree	15	9	15	9	11
Agree	33	32	32	33	35
Subtotal	**48**	**41**	**47**	**42**	**46**
Disagree	38	42	36	42	39
Strongly Disagree	14	17	17	16	15
Subtotal	**42**	**59**	**53**	**58**	**54**
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100

Table M3. Distribution of Major Questionnaire Construct Findings on Physical Aspect Across the Five Schools in the Sample

	School				
Responses	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
	Percentage				
Strongly Agree	22	25	26	27	17
Agree	31	27	35	37	39
Subtotal	**53**	**52**	**61**	**64**	**56**
Disagree	38	22	27	24	33
Strongly Disagree	9	26	12	12	11
Subtotal	**47**	**48**	**39**	**36**	**44**
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100

Table M4. Distribution of Major Questionnaire Construct Findings on Academic Aspect Across the Five Schools in the Sample

	School				
Response	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
	Percentage				
Strongly Agree	12	19	20	17	13
Agree	36	34	33	39	47
Subtotal	**48**	**53**	**53**	**56**	**60**
Disagree	36	30	41	31	32
Strongly Disagree	16	17	6	13	8
Subtotal	**52**	**47**	**47**	**44**	**40**
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100

APPENDIX N

CODING OF RESPONSES FROM INTERVIEWS AND FREE-RESPONSE QUESTION

Data	Respondent A	Respondent B	Respondent C	Respondent D	Respondent E
5th grade we did not have a locker			C4.145		
...fifth grade you knew when you were going to eat lunch but, in the sixth grade, you didn't			C5.202-203		
you had to get out of your seat and go eat			C5.205		
it was easy because your classes were right there		B2.69			
there were some classes outside and you had to search for them		B2.70			
P.E. and Band classes are way out there					E10.432
you had less than five minutes to get to other classes					E10.424

Data	Respondent F	Respondent G	Respondent H	Respondent I	Respondent J
I did not like the rules. You had to walk up and down on the right side					J21.915-916
the first six weeks I had a hard time because I couldn't open it. But when I kept getting familiar with it then I started opening it				I19.833-834	
they did not look so good to me.		G14.632			
in the sixth grade part					J21.924
I stayed out of trouble.			H17.764		
She would go over a lesson one time ..		G16.686-687			
He was loud. I like Science but the teacher was kind of loud…			H18.778-780		
I stayed out of trouble.			H17.764		

Data	Respondent A	Respondent B	Respondent C	Respondent D	Respondent E
I like changing classes…			C4.152-153		
That he told us to tell the principal..		B2.63-65			
I had lots of friends from elementary school	A1.6				
The first six weeks I was very quiet…			C4.183-184		
I was getting to meet new friends.				D8.332	
You had all these kids from different backgrounds.		B3.130			
They act tough…					E14.636
I had a good one because they new my brother.	A1.21				
The teacher was mean and I did not like him.			C5.215		
They were given too much homework.			C5.215		
Teachers would tell other teachers to say be quiet..			C5.219-221		
She always talks about her husband..			C6.248-250		

Data	Respondent F	Respondent G	Respondent H	Respondent I	Respondent J
She's mean and stuff. She yells at us.				I20.881	
Whenever I talk, she would send me to Coach..					J22.95-966
She was really, really nice and would work with you..			H17.769-770		
She was always on my side…				I20.872-873	
Whenever I need help all I had to do is go up to her desk.					J22.965
Stand up and tell how to do it and do worksheets	F13.552			Stand up and tell how to do it and do worksheets	F13.552
He would give you something kind of hard and go over it once…			H18.779-780	He would give you something kind of hard and go over it once…	
Worked in groups and enjoyed it.			H18.784,788	Worked in groups and enjoyed it.	

Data	Respondent A	Respondent B	Respondent C	Respondent D	Respondent E
She is very strict about everything.				D8.364	
He was real good at first. He started being mean..					E10.450-453
She always talks about her husband..			C6.248-250		
She is very strict about everything.				D8.364	
She was a real nice teacher. The class is easy…	A1.26-30				
I really didn't like the subject, but I liked the teacher..		B3.93-95			
She gives us time to think about stuff..			C6.233-236		
That if student like him were to get into trouble..		B3.104-105			
It was because she thought that we weren't very important..		B3.106-109			
We had to do it on our own…					E10.452-453

Data	Respondent F	Respondent G	Respondent H	Respondent I	Respondent J
It was a lot of fun and we did a lot of projects.		G15.677			
They were pretty high.			H17.744		
I made A's and B's		G15.653			
First six weeks they were high 80's and 90's.				I19.846	
Bad grades on report cards.		G15.649			
Second six weeks, they got low..				I19.846-847	
I had been in elementary so long..					J22.1001-1002
You had to wear your shirts tucked in and had to wear white shirts.					J22.1006

Data	Respondent A	Respondent B	Respondent C	Respondent D	Respondent E
We did experiments and projects.			C6.270		
My grades were important to me in elementary school..		B2.74-76			
When I got to middle school, something changed.		B2.77			
Some were good. Some were bad.			C5.192		
I went to C's and D's.			C5.192		
The first six weeks I was very quiet.		B4.183			
I was very shy at the time.				D9.391	
It was very scary and nervous.				D9.383	
I did know nobody at this school.			C7.279		
All I was seeing was sixth graders..			C7.280		

Data	Respondent F	Respondent G	Respondent H	Respondent I	Respondent J
It felt kind of different.		G16.716			J22.1001
It was hard.	F13.593				
It might seem like fun, but sometimes it will get hard.			H18.810		
There are times you should be serious.			H18.811		
They give too much work.			F12.511		
One teacher in elementary.					J23.1010
Five teachers in middle school.					J23.1014 J23.1018

Data	Respondent A	Respondent B	Respondent C	Respondent D	Respondent E
More difficult because you get SAC.	A2.53				
They give too much work.			C7.286		

Free Response

General Environment	FR23.1029, FR23.1035, FR23.1034, FR25.1135
Fitting In	FR24;.1081, FR25.1115, FR23.1016, FR24.1082-1083, FR24.1089, FR24.1072-1073, FR24.1082-1083, FR19.867-868
Physical Aspect	FR25.1138, FR24.1064, FR25.1139
Differential Teacher Treatment	FR25.1117-1118, FR23.1032, FR24.1059-1060, FR25.1144, FR26.1145
Homework/Sleep	FR26.1146
Grades	FR26.1177, FR26.1166, FR26.1183, FR25.1129, FR25.1113, FR25.1129, FR24.1079, FR24.1093, FR24.1093-1094
Elementary School Versus Middle School	FR23.1029, FR25.1123, FR26.1181, FR23.1031, FR24.1053, FR25.1107, FR25.1108, FR26.1160, FR23.1022, FR25.1141, FR24.1065, FR26.1183, FR26.1170, FR25.1121, FR25.1119, FR26.1154, FR23.1051, FR23.1043, FR24.1068, FR26.1164, FR25.1099, FR23.1039, FR24.1068, FR23.1047, FR26.1156, FR24.1096

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